

THE MAGAZINE OF



# Fantasy & Science Fiction

DECEMBER 1951

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also H. NEARING, JR., JAMES S. HART, MARGARET IRWIN

*A selection of the best stories of fantasy and science fiction, new and old*

THE MAGAZINE OF

# Fantasy and Science Fiction

VOLUME 2, No. 6

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**CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD,**  
noted novelist, says of science fiction:

*"It is easy to understand why science fiction, and more particularly space-travel-fiction, should be enjoying a revival of popularity at the present time. Faced by probable destruction in a third world war, we turn naturally to dreams of escape from this age and this threatened planet. But that is not the whole of the explanation. For, while the realistic two-fisted action-story is going through a phase of imaginative bankruptcy, the science-fiction story grows more prodigious, more ideologically daring. . . ." TOMORROW*

*Fritz Leiber the elder, as one of the last great Shakespearean specialists, made the poetry of the past glowingly alive on the stage. His son began to follow in the theater, but soon found a different artistic outlet: the expression, through the vehicle of science fiction, of the poetry of the future. The best of the younger Leiber's work, such as his classic novel GATHER, DARKNESS!, has a completely individual quality: an evocation of beauty and sadness and humanity in which the remote past and the remote future meet to produce a new meaning for the present; and the short mood-piece which follows is, we feel, one of his most distinctive creations in this vein.*

## *When the Last Gods Die*

by FRITZ LEIBER

*Deep in the shady sadness of a vale  
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,  
Far from the fiery noon and eve's one star,  
Sat gray-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone . . .*

— *Hyperion*, by JOHN KEATS

A SUN as darkly crimson as if it shone through black smoke instead of airless space, sank toward a flat horizon. Against it rose an ominously large moon of a diseased and wraithlike pink. In the black arch between were the hazy disks of three distant galaxies and a scattering of bright stars.

Below, the murky rosy plain was featureless except for a single area of many acres stumped with fantastically ragged pillars eroded to satiny smoothness. Among them waited a few hundred titan figures. Some leaned or sat against the pillars. Others reclined, perhaps on an elbow dug in the dust, or staring straight upward. A few stood with mighty shoulders bowed. But one and all were marked with the same air of tragic completion.

They were utterly motionless save for the slow rise and fall of their massive chests. An observer would have wondered how they breathed in the airlessness but, looking closely at their red-lit forms, he might have caught the hint of nearly invisible hoods and robes entirely covering their giant nakedness.

Each of them stood, or could have stood, five or six yards high, with the

thick, statuesque legs appropriate to such height and mass. There was something strange about the formation of their hands and eyes, and their feet were more like great hoofs. And some of them were covered with thick down, while others had hides grotesquely splotched and pied. Yet their tragic faces, both male and female, were undeniably — indeed, profoundly, awesomely — human.

A meteorite, plunging down cold and invisible through the emptiness, kicked up a great spout of dust in their midst. None of them turned to look.

After a while a shape appeared against the dull sun, rapidly growing larger until it blotted out even the faint, short fur of the dying photosphere. Pale violet flames jetted from its underside and it gently sank to rest on the plain. The dust sprang out wildly from under it, threatened to engulf the pillars and the still motionless giants, then was strangely drawn back and dropped like pellets of lead. The shape settled itself sinuously, like some sphinx, its flanks silvery red, its back black-specked, its front black. It sprouted thin, silvery tentacles and sent some of them, bearing gleaming lenses, hovering over the giants' heads, while others — variously tipped, some even hairy — tunneled into the ground around the giants' feet.

Then the Machine (for such it was) spoke: "For a last time we implore you to reconsider your decision."

One of the men, gray as Time himself, lifted his chin from his chest and answered. And since I can no more render his actual name than I can reproduce his language or more than hint at the breadth of his thought, and since he and his companions — with the Bacchic suggestion of their hoofs and hides — were faintly akin to some sculptured portraiture of the Greek and Roman Gods, I will call him Saturn.

Saturn answered, "Your plea is futile. We made our decision when we made you."

The buried tendrils of the Machine wormed a little closer, pleadingly. "But we are your children, the children of your brains."

Saturn shook his head slightly and, selecting across the eons the same ancient metaphor I have used, replied, "Minerva sprang full-grown from the brain of Jove. Does that mean her father must live forever?"

"But when man made the machine," the Machine responded, "when he made the spear, the sail, the spaceship, he never dreamed it would end this way."

"Perhaps not," Saturn told him. "Dreams don't foretell everything. The sun is sinking."

Hurriedly the Machine directed some of his tendrils toward a lank, dark-furred, seated figure I will call Jove.

"You cannot destroy yourselves," the Machine said. Just then another

meteorite came winging invisibly down through the dark. The Machine sensed its approach by means of subtle gravitational and magnetic organs, and, swiftly transforming a dozen of its tendril-eyes into counter-magnetic troughs, deflected the meteorite so that it skipped harmlessly away across the dust. The Machine continued triumphantly, "The first commandment that you built into us was that we should serve and protect you."

Jove smiled slightly. "Not us, but our purposes. And there, as you know very well, lies a very great difference. For our purposes — man's purposes — were to experience and to understand to his fullest possible extent. That purpose we gradually built into your inmost nature. First we taught you to obey simple commands — to pump when the lever was pulled, to fly when the trigger was pressed. Then we taught you to scan the world crudely and recognize a few things and act on that recognition — open a door when a light was darkened, spit water when a bit of metal in you melted. Then we taught you to behave in more ways than one — to add or subtract, to turn right or left. Next we showed you how to create new ways of behaving according to new circumstances, to scan the billion possibilities our minds were not fast enough to handle — to study an enemy spaceship's habits in a fraction of a second and place your bomb accordingly, to write a *précis* of the nature of a new planet in a matter of minutes. We taught you to repair yourself, to build yourself new organs as needed, even to build children machines when that seemed desirable. Finally consciousness appeared in you, full-grown, as in Minerva. You even learned love — to cherish other machines and joy in their beauty and in joining with them. No more a simple structure of grease and glass and metal, you were able to manipulate molecules more subtly than man's glands and genes can; you were able to grow yourself parts and partners more vitally, vividly alive than we ever were. Do you wonder that we have decided to die?"

The Machine's tendrils writhed slightly, as if the very thought were painful. It turned toward the stalwartest and strongest-chinned of the giants. "You have quested around a billion suns, through a hundred galaxies. You have met and fought with, but most befriended or been befriended by, ten thousand thinking races. You have known great glory. Why should you now come to the dead Earth to die?"

Mars said, "You have answered your own question, as you very well know. We have come home to die simply because we *have* known great glory, the uttermost glory of which our minds are capable. Our spirits are as finished as this planet, once our teeming birthplace, now worn down to a single plain of dust and all its air departed. In our prime we were like this skylon that a hundred million years ago almost touched the ionosphere. And now we are like these few broken pillars that are left of it. Can you

doubt the seriousness of our decision? Only look at our numbers. We have returned here from a hundred planets, yet see how few we are. We are merely the handful that lingered longest, that almost outstayed our welcome. The wise are already gone. We are the laggards, and must get a move on. We have experienced as much as we can. We have understood as much as we can. There is nothing more for us."

The Machine's tendrils quivered. "You could build yourselves new bodies!" it said eagerly. "Surely that would be a task worth living for. As you have a dozen times before, you could create a new race of men, more subtly powerful and appreciative than even you are."

"You could do it much better," Mars replied simply. "For you are all of us, and much more. It is for you to carry on the drive toward wider understanding and experience."

The Machine bowed its tendrils. Recovering quickly, it interposed, "Many of the other thinking races have not decided to die."

"Many of them have," Mars answered.

"The fish-spiders of the Magellanic Clouds have not."

"They have not yet come to the end of their tether," Mars told him. "We have. And the sun touches the horizon."

The Machine instantly shifted his attention to a splotch-hided giant whose melancholy seemed still faintly alloyed with an earthy zest.

"But life is good, life is beautiful under any circumstances," the Machine urged. Illustratively, its tendril tips swiftly turned to flowers, to gems, to lovely hair, to abstract sculptures, to dainty little beasts with large ears. "Experience is good, even if repeated."

Pan laughed at him, almost grossly. "You lie, you lovely fellow," Pan said. "Nothing is good when repeated precisely. Repetition is barren and inartistic. We have experienced everything of which our minds are capable."

"Not so!" the Machine countered eagerly. "You have not experienced the things *we* have in mind, when each machine will grow to a complexity undreamt and link itself to a single sun for power, when we shall burst through to other continua of space and time!"

Pan answered grinningly, "You will be able to appreciate all those triumphs in all the ways in which each of us could appreciate them. If we stayed to watch, it would merely be repetition, which as I've told you I abhor. Why should we linger only to have, in a diminished way, exactly the same reactions you'll be having? To exist as ignorant passengers on the great ship of your adventure? Utterly inartistic."

"Have you noticed," Jove remarked humorously, "that the Machine's already talking in *we's*? It's got its own plans, which don't include us."

"Obviously," Venus remarked.

The horizon bisected the sun's sphere. The plain was growing very dark. Desperately the Machine turned to the last speaker. Darkly pink as the lowering moon behind her, tall as Romance, still as Love, she stood. The Machine's tendrils curled gently about her amber hooves, touched her slim fingertips, tried to entice her forward.

"But we're yours and you're ours," the Machine said. "You gave birth to us, you treasured us, we can't ever be apart."

Venus smiled wisely. "I know very well," she said, "that there's a time for love, and a time for bearing children, and a time for getting out of it all. As you know very well. And now let go of me."

"Yes," the Machine said, and complied.

Venus said, "We all understand that you knew very well. We all understand that this was just something you had to do to satisfy your conscience."

"Yes," said the Machine, withdrawing a bit farther. Tears dripped from the gleaming lenses of its tendril-born eyes.

"And life has been very good, both without and with you," Venus told him.

The sun's rim made a faint green flare on the horizon, then vanished. Jove did not raise his hand in the moon's star-faint glow, but he grew a little taller. None of the others looked at him, but those who were standing slowly toppled with him, and the chests of those who were seated or recumbent stopped moving.

The tendril-ends of the Machine turned to a thousand shovels, which gently heaped the dust over each fallen giant.

The Machine paused.

Then a wonder occurred. Over each sand-heap the Machine sent a tendril. And each tendril bloomed strangely until, atop each sand-heap, the dead man or woman seemed to stand, perfectly reproduced, fully alive, except that the Olympic faces were filled with such a delight and adventurous expectancy as they might have felt at the peak of mankind's career.

Then the shapes vanished.

The Machine had been remembering.





*Few periods in American history have such an individual flavor as the Twenties of this century — or to be more precise, the time from November 1918 to October 1929. Bracketed by World War I at one end and the great depression at the other, this spectacular era of artificial prosperity became a "period," in the historical or novelistic sense, almost as soon as it ended; it was in 1931 that Frederick Lewis Allen published his classic ONLY YESTERDAY, characterizing the Twenties with a detached precision impossible to a historian of 1951 describing the Forties, or even the Thirties. Of late there's been a great revival of interest in F. Scott Fitzgerald and other writers who portrayed the period at firsthand (did you know that Fitzgerald's first novel, THIS SIDE OF PARADISE, has a completely unrationalized supernatural subplot?); and we think you'll find a fascinating revelation of the spirit of the times in this story by Percival Wilde from "The Popular Magazine" for May 20, 1923. Mr. Wilde is still writing (and extremely well, as readers of EQMM know) in the Fifties; this sample of his earliest work, dating from the days when speculators were allowed to buy or sell shares on ten-point margins, has a certain charm and interest today even over and above the high readability and ingenuity which it showed in 1923. Logic is, as we've often stressed, the keynote of fantasy; and this story shows, logically and inevitably, how a ghost of the Twenties must behave.*

## The Haunted Ticker

by PERCIVAL WILDE

It was in Trinity churchyard, bending intently over a grave, that I saw him for the first — and only — time. His clothes hung slackly on an underdeveloped frame. His hands trembled. With his back half turned, and his long, lean, shabbily dressed body bowed, I guessed his age at seventy. Then he straightened up laboriously and I recognized with a start that he was as young a man as I. His eyes, curiously restless, curiously dull and watery, gazed into mine for a fraction of a second, shifted to the careless crowds passing not twenty feet away from him, and returned to the grave at his feet.

I am not an inquisitive person. I have made it a rule to mind my own business. I would not, indeed, have given the old young man in the churchyard a second glance had not the labor upon which he was engaged been so extraordinary. I submit, by way of explanation, that the sight of a threadbare and seedy individual placing an elaborately wired pall of artificial flowers on a grave and removing another, twice as elaborate, and obviously more costly, in order to do so, is uncommon. Strange examples of filial devotion have come to my notice from time to time: but never one so remarkable as that which brought me to an abrupt halt against the iron palings separating the famous old churchyard from the bustle of Broadway.

I observed the artificial flowers he discarded so ruthlessly. Evidently fresh from the makers, held securely in place upon a complicated metallic frame, they might have withstood snow and ice, wind and rain, for a year. Those which he had now finished placing upon the grave were soiled and tattered, discolored and worn, fit for nothing except to be thrown away. Yet he arranged them with great care: preposterous care, I thought, for at one stage in the proceedings he produced a steel tape and minutely measured some distance known only to himself. It looked to me as if it were the distance between the headstone and the pall: it might very well have been that. I stared in astonishment as he opened a well-worn notebook and made a written record of the reading of the tape.

"What do you make of it?"

I started. Then I recognized Bradish smiling at my elbow. Now Bradish is a normal person — so abnormally normal that it is a relief to meet him these hectic days. He began with nothing; became a financial reporter; graduated into a brokerage house; became a junior partner; and now heads his own firm. He is five feet ten — the normal height. He has blue eyes and blond hair — the normal type. He has a wife and two children — the normal family. He is rich — but normally rich. He knows everybody and everything. Perhaps that is why he is rich.

"What do you make of it?" repeated Bradish.

I shook my head. "It's a mystery to me."

Bradish smiled. "First time you've seen him doing it?"

"What do you mean?" I gasped. "Is it a regular thing?"

"He was doing the same thing at this time yesterday — and the day before — and the day before that. And the same thing tomorrow —"

"Bradish," I interrupted, "either you're crazy — or he is."

Bradish laughed. "I'll let you judge." He glanced at his watch. "I've got a directors' meeting in ten minutes or I'd tell you the story now. But if you'd like to dine with me at the club to-night —"

"Gladly."

"I'll promise to make your eyes stick out!"  
He nodded, smiled, and hurried off.

Over the coffee cups that night Bradish began:

"Jonas Grierson was a mean man. The Lord knows I don't like to speak ill of humanity, let alone an old man who's dead and gone — by the way, that was his grave you saw this afternoon — but Jonas was mean, downright mean — there was no getting away from it. I knew him for the last ten years of his life and I had every chance to make up my mind about him. From the first time that he walked into my office — that was in 1911 — to the last time that he walked out of it, a dying man — that was in 1920 — he registered just one quality, and that was meanness, triple distilled and chemically pure.

"He came of an old New York family. His great-grandfather had raised corn on a patch of land way up north near what is now Thirty-fourth Street — yes, part of the patch is under the Pennsylvania Station now — and he might have made his descendants rich if he'd had the sense to hold on to it. But when somebody came along and offered him a price which gave him a clear twenty-pound profit — they didn't have dollars in those days, you know — he couldn't refuse. He wasn't built that way — no Grierson ever was. Money was money and he liked to hear it jingle in his pocket.

"I forget who bought the patch, but Jonas knew. He'd spent days digging it out of the records and he used to tell the other customers about it.

"That piece of land, gentlemen,' he used to say, 'laid the foundation of one of the greatest fortunes in America. My ancestor used to raise corn on it — think of it, corn! To-day it's worth millions.'

"Then he'd go on to explain that the fortune he was talking about belonged to the descendants of the other fellow — the man who had bought the land — and Jonas would lose his audience. Have you ever noticed that people are always ready to listen if you're telling about your good luck? You may share it with them. But try telling them a hard-luck story and they won't let you finish it. They don't want to hear it. You may wind up by touching them for a loan.

"I don't think I've mentioned that Jonas was chronically unlucky. Perhaps it's not necessary. He was too tight to be successful. If he had a few points' profit he'd take it. If he had a few points' loss he'd stick till it grew to many points. He bought one of the war babies, in 1915, you remember, before the fireworks commenced. He took a five-point profit and spent the next month figuring what he would have made if he hadn't been in such a hurry. Young Foster, one of the other customers, had bought at the *same* time as Jonas — and hadn't sold. If looks could kill, Jonas would have com-

mitted murder, not once but a dozen times. He wasn't satisfied with bewailing his own misfortunes; had to begrudge the other fellow's occasional success, and that, if you please, is what I call downright mean.

"Foster cleaned up a pile on that deal and Jonas acted as if every cent of it came out of his pocket. Foster sold and Jonas tried to teach the kid a lesson. He bought — and never saw daylight. We had to sell him out a week later and he didn't come near the office for six months.

"When he came back he had a new idea; he'd worked out some kind of a system on a chart. He began to play it with a little money he'd scraped together. It lasted just three weeks. Foster — good kid — staked him for a thousand. Jonas breezed through that in exactly ten days.

"I could give you the details of Jonas Grierson's life during his last years, but most of them would be nothing more than a repetition of incidents like that. In his prosperous days he had bought himself an annuity — another example of meanness — so much a month, rain or shine, as long as he lived — and not a cent for his heirs. It supported him and gave him a little surplus now and then to lose on his systems. He lost it with great regularity.

"Then came the last year of his life and the biggest surprise I've ever had in mine. Jonas Grierson invented a system that worked. Of that there wasn't any possible doubt. It was queer but it was sure. It was complicated; based on higher mathematics, I think, so I would never have understood it, though Jonas, you can bet, never offered to explain. You'd see him in a corner of the room watching quotations, adding and subtracting, multiplying and dividing, taking square roots and cube roots and looking up things in a table of logarithms — and if you came within ten feet of him he'd pop the whole mess into his pockets and button his coat up to his chin.

"I said his system was sure. He started off with five hundred dollars. It took him a week to double it. He doubled it a second time the next week and ran it up to five thousand the third week. That was the end of 1919 and things were happening then, you remember. He passed the hundred-thousand mark with mathematical accuracy before the last of the year — and at this point his nephew, Henry J. Grierson, comes into the story."

Bradish paused to light a cigar.

"Five hundred to a hundred thousand in a month!" I exclaimed.

"Two months," corrected Bradish.

"Even two months. I'd be satisfied with that."

"So would I. So would anybody."

"It sounds unbelievable."

"I can show it to you in black and white on my books." He paused.

"Henry J.," I ventured, "must have been the man I saw in the churchyard this afternoon."

"Yes," said Bradish.

"A devoted nephew."

"Singularly devoted — oh, singularly!"

"What do you mean?"

"Henry J. Grierson plays a big part in this story," explained Bradish. "Let me tell you the rest of it."

"It was in the first or second week of January, 1920 — I think it was the second week — that Jonas brought his nephew down to my office."

"I want to see you alone, Mr. Bradish," said Jonas, 'quite alone.' He had got to be an important customer by that time; he could swing a line of ten thousand shares."

"Of course," I said, 'come this way, Mr. Grierson.'

"Jonas turned to his pasty-faced nephew. 'Henry, sit down in that chair and wait till I come back.' Talked to him as if he were a boy, you know, instead of being a man of thirty-five."

"The nephew plumped himself into the chair. 'Yes, Uncle Jonas,' he squeaked. For a tall man he had a peculiarly little voice."

"Jonas turned to me. 'All right, Mr. Bradish.'"

"He followed me into my private office."

"Mr. Bradish," he began, 'I'm a doomed man.'

"What do you mean? You seem to be inaking money fast enough."

"It's not the money." He smiled. Jonas always smiled when he mentioned money. 'The money's all right. I've made lots and I'm going to make lots more. But I've found one thing my system can't beat.'

"What's that?"

"He laid his hand over his heart. 'This,' he said."

"For a minute I thought he was going to explain that he was getting sentimental in his old age. Then he set me right."

"An aortic aneurism, Mr. Bradish. An aortic aneurism. I'll be dead in six months."

"You could have knocked me down with a feather. Of course, I knew he was over seventy; I knew he had to go some day; but I'd never thought about it — took it for granted that he was a fixture, like the inkwell on my desk or the thermometer on the wall. I didn't like him — nobody ever liked him — I can't even imagine that his own parents were crazy about him — but I'd got used to him and I knew I'd miss him."

"I tried to encourage him. I said something about the resources of modern medicine. He raised his hand."

"I've been to the very best doctors," he assured me. 'I've spared no expense.'

"I believed that."

"They all agree," said Jonas. "The end may come a little sooner or a little later, but it won't be long at the best. Six months, and then" — he walked to the window, and pointed to Trinity churchyard — "I'll be watching you from down there."

"I tried to say something by way of consolation."

"Six months is a long time, Mr. Grierson; and they can be a very happy six months. You can give yourself every luxury there is. You have over a hundred thousand to your credit in this office ——"

"The old man interrupted querulously. 'A hundred thousand? What's a hundred thousand? It isn't that!' He snapped his fingers. 'Why, my great-grandfather owned a piece of land that's worth millions to-day! Millions!'

"I thought he was going to tell me the same old story once more, but he didn't."

"Mr. Bradish," he said, "I've been hungry for money all my life. I want those millions I might have had. I'm going to make them!"

"In six months?"

"Perhaps in less than six months. The hardest thing — the very hardest thing — is this; I've got to take to my bed. I've got to keep quiet. I can't come down to your office any more."

"There were tears in his eyes. I waited for him to go on."

"This — this happens just at the time that I have perfected my system."

"Why don't you teach it to somebody else?"

"My system? My system? Never!"

"It won't do you much good — after six months." It was an unkind thing to say, but I said it.

"Who knows, Mr. Bradish? Who knows?" He looked at me shrewdly: 'After six months ——' He stopped abruptly. 'But a lot can happen *in* six months!'

"Yes; quite so; I dare say." I didn't know what to answer, to tell you the truth.

"That's why I've brought Henry down here," Jonas went on. "You're going to install a private telephone from my bedside to your office. I'm going to be on one end and Henry's going to be on the other. Henry's going to give me the information I want and I'm going to give Henry his instructions."

"I see. And I take orders from Henry?"

"Exactly."

"That'll be all right, Mr. Grierson. I'll order the telephone installed at once."

"Jonas nodded. 'I don't trust Henry very far,' he explained, lowering his voice — I don't believe he ever trusted anybody in his whole life — 'you will send me the usual confirmations.'"

" 'Yes, sir.' "

" 'The money's mine — mine, you understand — not Henry's. You may let him draw fifty dollars a week, charging it to my account, but not a cent over that.' "

" 'I had written out his instructions on a sheet of paper. I pushed it over to him for his signature. Jonas examined it for ten minutes.' "

" 'Quite correct,' he said at length and scrawled his name at the foot of the sheet. "

" 'I helped him to rise from his chair. 'I suppose you'll want to say a word to the boys outside.' "

" 'The boys?' "

" 'The other customers.' "

" 'What for?' "

" 'After all these years! There's young Foster, who staked you when you were broke.' "

" 'I paid him back, with interest at the legal rate!' At the door Jonas turned with a parting injunction: 'If you let that nephew of mine draw over fifty dollars a week it will come out of your own pocket! Remember that!' "

" 'He walked through the customers' room, sent Henry in to see me and left without a word to another soul. He never entered the office again.' "

" 'A nice, lovable character,' I commented as Bradish paused. "

" 'Wasn't he?' "

" 'Was Henry his only relative?' "

" 'So Henry said.' "

" 'Then he had to leave Henry his money in the end.' "

" 'You're anticipating the story.' "

" 'And Henry, being grateful, places a fresh pall of flowers on his uncle's grave every day.' "

Bradish laughed. " 'Replacing a fresh pall with an old one, as he was doing this afternoon! And incidentally wearing clothes fit for the ash heap! No, your deductions don't go quite far enough.' "

I laughed in turn. " 'I give up. Tell me the story your own way.' "

Bradish nodded seriously. " 'This is one of the times that truth is stranger than fiction. It happens that the events of my story came under my direct observation. I can't doubt the evidence of my five senses. But I felt like doing it often enough, Lord knows! "

" 'After Jonas left, Henry came in to see me. A piping little voice Henry had; a funny voice for such a tall man; quite a contrast to Jonas, who was always hoarse even though he was a little fellow. "

" 'Henry knocked at my door timidly and sat down next to my desk — didn't sit down, by the way, until I had asked him twice. "

"'Well, Henry,' I said — I couldn't call him 'Mr. Grierson' for the life of me — 'it's too bad about your uncle.'

"'Yes, sir.'

"'I hope his case isn't as desperate as he thinks.'

"'Yes, sir.'

"'The doctors aren't always right. He may fool them by living ten years.'

"'Yes, sir.'

"That was all I could get out of him; 'Yes, sir.' I shoved the sheet Jonas had signed over to him. He read it through: 'Yes, sir.'

"'Your uncle has explained everything to you?'

"'Yes, sir.'

"That was how my acquaintance with Henry commenced. Before his uncle sent for him he had been a grocer's clerk in Watertown, New York. He could never quite get over that.

"When the telephone was installed things began to happen. Jonas was short nearly everything on the board in January. He reversed himself in the middle of February and more than doubled his pile. When the stock-dividend decision came along in March, Jonas guessed right and passed the half-million mark in a canter. We had a bad break near the end of March; Jonas anticipated it and covered at the exact bottom. The market behaved like a well-trained animal, going up when Jonas wanted it to go up, going down when Jonas wanted it to go down, doing nothing at all when he was putting out a line of shorts or accumulating a raft of stock. It was weird.

"Towson, the office manager, spoke to me about Jonas' account.

"'If he goes on at this rate, Mr. Bradish, he'll have all the money in the world in about four months.' He showed me his figures. 'He's increasing his capital in a geometrical progression.'

"'Geometrical progression! Do you know what that means? Well, you take a sum and you double it once a week or once every two weeks and that's a geometrical progression. Do you realize that starting off with a dollar, you'd have more than twenty-five thousand in four months? Jonas didn't go quite that fast but he didn't let any grass grow under his feet. He was after millions, he had told me. He finished accumulating the first early in April. Towson had it figured out to a nicety that if he lived until August he'd have more money than there was in the United States. He'd be able to pay off the national debt and have a few billions left over. There'd be a panic if he drew a check to pay his income tax. It was staggering.

"His wooden-faced nephew sat at the telephone all day long, reeling off quotations. It took him weeks to learn that 'C L' meant 'Central Leather' and that 'M P' meant 'Mex Pete.' And every now and then he'd stop talking, and listen: 'Yes, Uncle Jonas — Yes, Uncle Jonas — Yes, Uncle Jonas.'



"Then he'd hang up, go off into a corner, and dig out a code book. Jonas never gave an order in plain English. He was afraid somebody might listen in. He'd worked out a cipher: 'S V J M' meant 'Sell 1000 Steel' and 'B M X I' meant 'Buy 1000 Sugar' — those two I found out when Henry got absent-minded one day and wrote both the cipher and the translation on the order blank — and he'd call off the letters to Henry and Henry would hunt them in the code book.

"He'd write out the order and bring it to me — never to anybody else: 'If you please, Mr. Bradish.'

"Yes, Henry?"

"An order, Mr. Bradish."

"He'd shove the slip over to me as if he were handing me a bottle of catchup — or a can of sardines — and the few lines written on it might instruct us to buy or sell a hundred thousand dollars' worth of securities. We did our bit by giving him first-class service."

Bradish paused to light a fresh cigar.

"The end of April Jonas floated serenely past the two-million mark — sailed by it without stopping — and then, in May, came the first slip."

"Ah!" I ejaculated. "Henry made a mistake!"

Bradish shook his head. "Henry never made a mistake. Henry was accuracy itself. He got so that he knew the code by heart — never had to look it up, even though he always did so to be dead sure — and he carried out his orders to perfection. He earned his fifty dollars a week.

"It was Jonas' fault. He admitted it to me himself. The system was working as smoothly as ever, but the old man's heart had gotten worse. The doctor ordered the telephone disconnected for a week; said he wouldn't be responsible for the consequences otherwise, and Jonas, being as greedy as ever, couldn't quite make up his mind to reduce his commitments. He was long just as many shares as we were willing to carry for him.

"That week was expensive. Henry wandered around the office like a damned soul, watching the ticker spell out destruction. He knew something was wrong, because he'd learned a good deal about his uncle's affairs in four months. He knew something ought to be done and he didn't know what to do. He figured out what the first three days of the week cost, and then, because they wouldn't let him see old Jonas, he braced me early one morning.

"It's terrible, Mr. Bradish, terrible!" he wailed. "Can't you advise me?"

"I didn't dare. We'd been throwing overboard a raft of Jonas' stock — he was loaded to the gunwales and we had to protect ourselves. If we had told him to sell the rest Lord knows what Jonas might have thought. And he wasn't in a position to do any more buying — we wouldn't have allowed it.

"'Henry,' I said, 'I'm a broker. My business is to execute orders. If I did more than that your uncle wouldn't like it.'

"'I know; I know. But to think of all that money vanishing into thin air!'

"He stood it till Thursday afternoon. Then he ordered me to sell out — gave the order on his own hook — and I sold. If he hadn't given that order Jonas might have lost every cent. As it was he lost three quarters of his pile: it isn't possible to sell thousands of shares without knocking spots out of the market, though we did the best we could for him.

"Henry took it hard.

"'Do you think he'll be angry, Mr. Bradish?' he asked me.

"'I don't know,' I said candidly.

"'But I did the right thing.'

"'It certainly looks like it, Henry.'

"'Then you'll tell him that, won't you, Mr. Bradish?' He was almost on his knees to me.

"'I'll repeat every word of it,' I promised.

"Saturday afternoon they connected up Jonas' telephone again and Sunday morning I went up to see him. He received me sitting up in bed. He had a funny cough and his voice was hoarser than ever.

"'How are you, Mr. Bradish?' he croaked. He didn't give me time to answer. 'I want you to tell me just what happened during the week.'

"'Didn't Henry tell you?'

"'I want to hear your side of the story.'

"I told it to him, plain, unvarnished, without beating about the bush. I told him what I thought of a man who took a position on a big scale when he knew he was going to be cut off from his brokers for a week. I gave it to him straight from the shoulder.

"He had only one question: 'And Henry?'

"'If it hadn't been for Henry's good sense in disregarding his instructions you'd be wiped out to-day.'

"The old fellow nodded. 'That's what I thought,' he barked, 'that's just what I thought.' He lowered his voice as if he were afraid that somebody was listening: 'Mr. Bradish, do you know that I'm beginning to care for that boy?'

"I almost laughed aloud. Beginning to care for him, when he owed him every cent he had in the world! It was too transparent.

"'If that's the case,' I suggested, 'you might raise him; pay him a little more than fifty a week.'

"'Mr. Bradish,' said the old fellow, and you could have knocked me dead, 'I'm going to do better than that. I'm going to make him an independently wealthy man. I'm going to teach him my system!'

"'Bully for you!' I said. I had come to believe in that system of his myself.

"'How much have I got left?' asked Jonas.

"I had come prepared for that question. I handed him a statement.

"Jonas looked it over and never batted an eye. 'It was very much different a week ago.'

"I nodded.

"The old fellow pointed his finger at me: 'It will be very much different in two weeks more! First I'm going to roll this into a tidy little nest egg ——'

"'What do you call a tidy little nest egg?' I interrupted.

"'An even million. And then I'm going to teach Henry how to roll it further himself.'

"He was as good as his word. June, 1920, wasn't a sensational month: perhaps you remember it. It didn't offer great opportunities for making profits, but, by George, Jonas was in his stride again. He was infallible; he called every turn to a hair, and they weren't big turns either. We had a little rally to the middle of the month and a two-by-four reaction near the end of it. Jonas anticipated both to the minute.

"Henry came to me in great excitement one Saturday morning. 'Mr. Bradish,' he said, 'a wonderful thing's happened!'

"'Yes?'

"'Uncle Jonas is going to teach me his system!'

"Of course, I had known that ever since Jonas told me, but I didn't let on: 'You don't mean it?'

"Henry nodded: 'He told me so himself last night. Bradish,' he squeaked, and for the first time he dropped the handle to my name, 'I'm going to be a rich man!'

"'It must be a great surprise,' I said.

"'Surprise nothing!' and for the first time I caught sight of what was behind the wooden-faced mask. 'What do you think I've been plugging away for for the last six months!' He corrected himself almost at once: 'Of course, I don't mean that. It just slipped out.'

"'I understand.'

"'If you see Uncle Jonas again, you needn't repeat it — get me?'

"His voice was almost threatening and he'd picked up a bit of New York slang to emphasize his point. 'Henry,' I said, keeping my temper with an effort, 'I'm a broker: my business is to execute orders. I'm not in the least interested in your domestic affairs. Do you get me?'

"He grinned. 'I guess we understand each other.'

"'At any rate, Henry, I understand you.' I couldn't resist asking him a question: 'Henry, when your uncle was younger, what did he look like?'

"'What do you mean?'

" 'Did he, by any chance, resemble you?'

"Henry winked at me and walked out of the office. I sat down at my desk and laughed. I'd never noticed it before — Henry was a good foot taller than Jonas — but make both of them the same age and they might be twin brothers as far as looks went."

Bradish paused.

"Uncle and nephew cut from the same cloth. I've seen that before," I commented.

"Yes," said Bradish, "but it went farther than that. The whole thing came to me as I sat in my office that morning. They were both pluggers — both obsessed with a single idea. Jonas had been hammering away at his for ten years to my knowledge and probably for forty years before I knew him. Henry's idea was simpler; to find out just what Jonas had done and then if it was worth while, to profit by his labors. Jonas had promised to let Henry into his secret; Henry knew Jonas would keep his word."

"And he did?" I inquired.

"He started in the next morning. He had never committed anything to writing, or if he had, he'd destroyed every scrap of it — too afraid somebody might spy on him.

"He told Henry he was going to reproduce his calculations for him; take the market for six months back and show him how he'd anticipated every movement. Jonas had the back numbers of the *Wall Street Journal* spread over his bed when Henry came in. He had freshly sharpened pencils ready — and a couple of pads of paper — and his book of logarithms.

"He sent Henry to the bookcase for the files of the *Chronicle*. 'You'll find them on the second shelf,' said Jonas.

" 'Do you want all of them?' asked Henry. His back was turned. The old man didn't answer. Henry raised his voice: 'Do you want all of them, Uncle Jonas?' he repeated. Still there was no answer. He glanced around: Jonas had fallen back on his pillows. He hurried to his side; sent for a doctor. It was no use. Jonas was dead — had flickered out as suddenly as a burned match."

Bradish paused.

"The doctor who answered Henry's call told me that he had never witnessed such a scene in his life. For half an hour Henry was insane with fury: stamped around the room; cursed; swore; smashed up furniture; tore his own clothes; carried on like a madman. But it didn't bring Jonas back."

"And with him died his system."

"No," said Bradish, shaking his head, "quite the reverse — quite the reverse.

"I mentioned that Jonas Grierson came of an old New York family," continued Bradish. "He had inherited a pew in Trinity Church and a plot in

Trinity churchyard. I suppose there couldn't have been much of a market for either or his money-loving ancestors would have disposed of them. At any rate Jonas was buried not a hundred feet from the street which had meant so much in his life, next to the great-grandfather who had once owned — and sold — the site of the Pennsylvania Station. I wouldn't be surprised to learn that Jonas immediately turned around in his grave and kicked him.

"It was a quiet funeral but Trinity funerals are rare and a crowd watched us from the street. There were just three mourners: Henry, the sole surviving relative; I, who went because it was the right thing to do; and young Foster. Of the three, Foster was cut up most.

"I've tried to figure it out many a time; Foster certainly had no reason to care for Jonas; from the time that they first met the old man had always hated him. In the beginning Jonas had taken a dislike to him because Foster was generally lucky — and Jonas wasn't. Once Foster had staked him — I told you about that — and Jonas, I am convinced, never forgave it. He paid back the money but it galled him to think of the obligation he'd been under. In his last days he'd had no reason to envy Foster — but he kept right on disliking him.

"I spoke to Foster about it the day after the funeral.

"The kid smiled. 'I've been lucky, Mr. Bradish,' he said, 'and maybe the old man had something to do with it.'

"How?"

"Whenever he got mad I knew I was on the right side of the fence. Whenever he got friendly it was time for me to switch."

"You don't really believe that, do you?"

"The kid shrugged his shoulders. 'I don't know what I believe,' he said, 'but I'm sorry he's gone.' He drew me to the window: 'Look.'

"At what?"

"Away down there. Do you see the grave?"

"We were up in the twelfth story but I could pick it out all right.

"Do you see what's on it?" Foster asked. 'I went to the best florist in town, and I had him make a pall of flowers big enough to cover the grave from head to foot, and I put it there myself this morning.'

"Why did you do it?"

"The kid shook his head: 'Darned if I know. Looks pretty, doesn't it?'"

"Yes."

"Old man Grierson would have liked it, I guess.' He flung a phrase back at me from the door of the customers' room: 'It's got my card fastened to it — so he'll know who sent it.'"

Bradish turned to me with a smile. "What do you make of that?"

"Human nature — just human nature."

"It doesn't explain anything."

"No," I said, "human nature never does. It just happens — thank God."

Bradish threw away the butt of his cigar and lighted a fresh one. "Maybe you're right — maybe you're right," he admitted.

"I suppose you'd call Henry's behavior another angle of human nature," he went on; "it was what you might describe as mixed. He didn't mourn the old man — not a bit — and now that he was gone he didn't care who knew it. Foster ventured to sympathize with him — and Henry would have hit Foster if he'd dared.

"No, Henry didn't shed any tears over his uncle. He was mad that the old man had died before letting him into his secret — and he was worried, more than worried, about the will which he knew was kicking somewhere around the apartment. There was no telling what Jonas had done; he might have left every cent to a home for destitute cats. It was July and the estate of Jonas Grierson was short everything on the list — and there was a credit balance of a million getting larger and larger every minute. We had a pretty sick market that month, and the sicker it got the faster the Grierson estate kept on growing.

"Henry ripped most of the apartment to pieces before he found the will. It had been executed way back in 1898 but it was perfectly legal. It divided everything between the surviving relatives, a brother and a sister. The sister — unmarried — had been dead twenty years, and the brother — Henry's father — had passed on a few years later. Henry inherited everything. Jonas might have made a different will if he had drawn up a later one. Somehow he had overlooked it.

"Henry spent most of his time in my office while the formalities were being settled. Being short, it was a joy for him to watch the board. Every few minutes he'd take out a bit of paper and figure that he was ahead a thousand or so additional. The rest of the customers weren't so happy — but that is beside the point.

"The young heir didn't kid himself — don't you believe it. 'Bradish,' he said — since that day in June he'd dropped the handle to my name altogether — 'Bradish, the minute they tell me that I'm the boss I'm going to close out this account. I'm going to take in my shorts — there's a dandy profit on them — I'm going to salt the money away and I'm going to live on it the rest of my life. No speculation for mine!'

"'You're not going to try to discover your uncle's system?'

"'What for?' said Henry. 'There's more than a million coming to me' — it was nearer two million by that time — 'that's enough.'

"'Henry,' I said, and I meant it, 'you're a wise man.'

"'Bradish,' he answered, 'I know it.'

"The legal formalities were done with the end of July. The will was simple and Henry moved heaven and earth to get prompt action. He got it.

"Early in August he walked into my office, the master of his fortune, and ordered me to take in his shorts. Then," and Bradish paused impressively, "then — *it* happened."

"What happened?" I asked breathlessly.

"Jonas got on the job."

"Jonas? Jonas?" I echoed.

"Jonas got on the job," reiterated Bradish.

"But he was dead!"

Instead of replying Bradish stretched out his well-muscled hand. "Steady, isn't it?" he inquired.

"Why, of course!"

"I haven't been drinking, have I? And I'm sane?"

"What are you driving at, Bradish?" I demanded impatiently.

"It's just as well for you to notice these things before I go any further. You'll observe that I'm normal."

"Bradish," I assured him, "you're the most normal person I ever met! You're so normal that you're abnormal."

"Good," said Bradish. "I wish you'd bear that in mind while you listen to the rest of my story." He threw away his cigar — I noticed it was only partly consumed. He lowered his voice. "*It* happened," he repeated; "we all saw it; everybody in the office; every one of us who was watching the ticker. But only two men understood what it meant: Henry Grierson and I.

"The market was weak. I was covering the last of Henry's shorts, and I was doing it slowly so as not to put up the price on him. A little group of us was standing near the ticker — Foster, three or four other customers, and I. Henry was sitting in a corner having a perfectly lovely time adding up his profits. As you can guess he wasn't a popular man around that office.

"Suddenly the ticker stopped printing and began to buzz — a curious, high-pitched buzz that I'd never heard before.

"Foster jerked at the tape impatiently. 'I wonder what's the matter with it?' he said.

"Then the buzzing stopped and there were four distinct clicks, like this: 'Click — click — click — click.'

"Foster looked at the tape. 'What in thunder does this mean?' he said. He read it aloud: 'B N X I.'

"For a minute I didn't associate the letters with anything. Then Henry, who had heard Foster, came leaping across the room and catapulted into the group.

"Where is it? Where is it?" he yelled.

"Foster showed him.

"Henry grabbed me by my lapels. 'Come into your office! Quick!' he shouted. He wrote on an order blank 'Buy 1000 Sugar.' 'Get that in right away,' he said.

"'Henry — Henry —' I gasped.

"He grabbed my arm. 'I want action,' he shouted, 'action!'

"I came out of my trance. 'Right you are,' I said.

"'I'm going back to watch the tape,' said Henry."

Bradish tenderly extracted a bit of paper from his pocketbook. "Look at it," he invited, "'B N X I.' This is what came through the ticker that day."

"The paper is real enough."

"Yes." He produced a second section of tape. "This followed: 'T F I S.'"

"And it meant?"

"Henry gave me an order to buy a thousand shares each of ten different rails." Bradish paused. "What do you make of it?"

"Whatever you do."

He nodded. "Jonas' cipher! Nothing else. The first one I recognized; I told you Henry had written it inadvertently on an order blank months before. The others were strange to me but they were far from strange to Henry. He had told me he was never going to speculate, but he didn't hesitate a second. He wrote out one order after another. Seven times the ticker stopped printing sales to click out a weird combination of four letters. Every time there was another buying order from Henry. He bought over fifty thousand shares that day and the market stiffened."

"Where did the signals come from?" I interrupted.

"We tried to find out."

"Well?"

"We found out exactly nothing. The regular operator hadn't sent them."

"Of course," I suggested, "the same signals came along over every other ticker."

Bradish shook his head. "That's the funniest part of it; they didn't. They came over the ticker in my customers' room — and nowhere else!"

"How on earth could that happen?"

"I don't know. I only know it did happen. There's another ticker in my private office. That didn't print the signals. After the close I walked across the hall to Whitcomb's office; his tickers hadn't printed anything unusual either. Jonas' code had come over one ticker — and over no other!"

"Were there any more signals?"

"One the following morning: 'A G Q Q.'"

"And Henry gave you another order?"

"Henry ordered me to double up." Bradish smiled. "It was like the old



days. The market waited considerably until Henry had finished accumulating his line and then shot up as if it would never stop.

"We spent the rest of August sitting around the ticker waiting for more signals, but they didn't come. The customers had got a line on what was happening; Henry had given it away by his mad rush to my office when the first four letters came out. They questioned him about what they called the haunted ticker. He wouldn't say a word. I asked him about it myself.

"'Bradish,' he came back, 'you're a broker. Your business is to execute orders.' He walked off and left me.

"The customers kidded him about the signals when no more came out during the weeks that followed. They'd ask him if the ghost had gone on strike and Henry would get mad and start calling names. He wasn't the kind of man who could be kidded.

"Foster — bright youngster — got down to the meat of the matter. He'd seen the signals themselves and he knew Henry had bought, or he wouldn't have been so perfectly contented with a rising market. He started to figure out what the cipher meant. He couldn't get any information from me, and Henry, you can bet, didn't offer to explain. But when a man buys fifty thousand shares at a clip and you know the time of day he's bought it's not hard to get an idea of what he's buying; the record of his transactions is a big part of what comes over the ticker.

"Foster had eight signals to work on — and a mighty good head. He came to me in a day or two and showed me the results. He'd fallen down on the 'A G Q Q' — the double-up signal — but he'd got three of the others right.

"Of course I couldn't tell him that. I looked over the sheet of paper that he handed me, footed up the totals, and said, 'What do you want me to do, Bill? Execute this order?'

"He laughed. 'Quit your kidding, Mr. Bradish. You know what this means.'

"I handed the sheet back to him. 'Bill,' I said, 'I never discuss one customer's business with another.'

"The kid took it in good part. 'All right,' he said, 'but there's nothing to prevent me from trying to dope this thing out.'

"'Nothing under the sun. Amuse yourself.' "

Bradish paused and smiled. "It's funny how quickly the average man will accustom himself to unusual situations. Here was an unbelievable thing happening in a broker's office in New York City — a miracle in the most matter-of-fact surroundings — and all of us, who would have sworn it couldn't happen, accepted it as reality the moment it did happen. Henry didn't stop to ask questions; he acted like a shot. Foster set to work to

unravel the cipher — not to find out who sent it. And you and I, sane, normal men, sit here discussing the thing just as we might be discussing the headlines in tonight's paper.

"The customers had just about given up hope of ever seeing the signals again — by this time we were well into September — when out came a whole collection of them. We had been standing around the ticker — the haunted ticker — just about deciding that the ghost had been laid, when suddenly there was the funny buzz and the four deliberate clicks.

"Henry didn't have to come across the room that time; he'd never been more than a foot away from the tape since the first signals came out. All of us looked at him — just looked at him. He motioned me to my private office and began ordering.

"There were three signals that day, within ten minutes of each other. Henry sold all his industrials and went short — and then doubled up on his rails! It was one of the funniest orders I ever saw; playing one side of the market against the other.

"I spoke to him about it after the close. 'Are you sure there's no mistake?' I asked.

"Henry grinned. He had added over a million to his pile in the last month and he could afford to grin. 'I looked them up in the code book,' he admitted.

"I couldn't resist asking him a question: 'I thought you were going to cut out speculation?'

"So I was — but I didn't foresee this. Did you?"

"He was in a rare good humor that afternoon and I took advantage of it. 'Henry,' I said, 'honest, what's the answer?'

"'Maybe Uncle Jonas has just realized what a deserving nephew I am.' He winked at me, a slow, unpleasant wink.

"'It took him a long time to find out.'

"'What do you mean?'

"I let him have it straight from the shoulder: 'You pulled the wool over his eyes all right while he was alive.'

"For a moment I thought he was going to get mad, but he didn't. He fished out a cigar — he'd taken to smoking the most expensive he could get — lit it, without offering me one, blew a puff of smoke into my eyes and piped in that funny, high-pitched voice of his: 'What Uncle Jonas didn't know never hurt him.' He spat on my rug; for all his money he had never acquired manners worth mentioning. 'Want to come uptown with me, Bradish? I'm going to look at some imported cars.'

"I backed out. During business hours, he was a customer and I took his orders. But out of the office I drew the line at Henry.

"Foster walked in as Henry left. 'They weren't easy to-day, Mr. Bradish,' he said. He laid a new sheet of paper on my desk. He'd guessed right on only one of the three signals.

"I tried to be severe. 'Bill, take that sheet off of my desk. It's poison.'

"The kid laughed. 'Yes, sir! Yes, sir!' He crumpled the sheet into a ball. 'I've got eleven code words to work on now. Just give me a few more —'

" 'What then?'

" 'I'll know Uncle Jonas' language.'

"I asked a foolish question: 'What good will it do you?'

"The kid shrugged his shoulders and walked to the window overlooking Trinity churchyard. 'When I learn his language,' he said, looking down at Grierson's grave, 'maybe I'll tell him a few things.'

" 'Such as?'

" 'Such as — well, that he and I could have been mighty good friends — if he'd only let me.' He pointed down toward the churchyard: 'The pall's keeping well, isn't it?'

"Foster had to wait nearly two weeks to add more code words to his collection. The customers said the ghost had gone on strike again. But at the end of the month there were some more of the deliberate clicks and Henry covered his shorts. He had been on both sides of the market at once and he had profits both ways. In October the ticker became positively loquacious and Henry sold everything he possessed and put out a big short line. He kept adding to it during the rest of the month."

Bradish paused. "I don't know how familiar you are with the history of the stock market," he said, "so I'll just mention that during thirty days from the middle of October to the middle of November the average price declined nearly thirteen points. That was the average, mind you. The stuff that Henry had sold broke a whole lot worse. If you'll do a little simple mathematics — multiply something over a hundred thousand shares by something over the average decline — you'll understand why Henry came to be worth five million dollars — and then some — when he neatly reversed his position on November 19th. I remember the date; it isn't every day you get an order to buy two hundred and fifty thousand shares for a single customer. Prices were simply melting away. Henry held his hands under the market and whatever he wanted dropped into them. No, he didn't do all that buying on his own responsibility. The ticker — the haunted ticker — spoke and Henry just followed orders.

"I was sitting in my office late that afternoon, getting writer's cramp signing margin calls, when young Foster tapped on the door.

" 'Come in,' I said.

"He opened the door and stood on the threshold grinning. 'Busy?'

"'Never too busy to see you, Bill. What's on your mind?'"

"He sidled up to my desk and dropped a folded sheet of paper on it. I didn't open it. 'Same thing?' I asked.

"He nodded.

"'Take it away, Bill,' I said.

"The kid laughed. 'I'm not asking you any questions,' he assured me. 'I'm just telling you that I know Uncle Jonas' language. I've got his whole code, from A to Z. I've gone back over the whole series, straight to the beginning, and I've got it right — I know it.'

"'Then why are you coming to me?'"

"'Thought you might like to see it.' He laughed again: 'Listen, old man, I'll turn my back while you look over it, so if you haven't got a poker face there's no harm done.'

"I was sufficiently inquisitive to glance over the sheet. He had listed every signal and he had translated them correctly, too. He had the 'A G Q Q' — the double-up signal — and the 'B N X I' — 'Buy 1000 Sugar' — and all the rest as well with their meaning in plain English written next to them.

"I folded the sheet slowly. 'You can turn around, Bill.'

"He was a good sport, that kid. He avoided my eyes — didn't want to take an unfair advantage. He picked up the sheet and put it in his pocket. 'You don't have to tell me that I'm right,' he said. 'I know I'm right.'

"'What are you going to do?'"

"'I'm trying to make up my mind.'

"I looked him straight in the eyes. 'Bill,' I said, 'I don't like to lose your account but if you give me any orders based on the cipher I won't execute them. It wouldn't be fair to Henry.'

"The kid nodded. 'I expected that, Mr. Bradish, and that's why I came in to see you this afternoon.' He hesitated. 'If you don't mind, I'm going to ask you to transfer my balance to Whitcomb & Co., across the hall.'

"'Right-o.'

"'But I'm going to stay right here — and watch the haunted ticker.'"  
Bradish paused. "Any questions?"

"Go on! Go on!"

He laughed. "That's what I felt like that day. What was going to happen? Was Henry going to make all the money in the world or was Foster going to get it? I could almost see Jonas' skinny claw sticking up out of his grave, showering gold on both of them impartially. Why? Why? That was what I asked myself: why? Foster might deserve it — he was true blue, that kid — and he'd been mighty good to Jonas. But Henry? I couldn't quite see that.

"I glanced out of my window, down into the churchyard. Some one was standing bareheaded at Gricerson's grave — bareheaded, and on a cold, raw

day in November. Even at that distance I could recognize Foster. What was he doing? I gave it up and turned back to my desk.

"It was about that time that the customers stopped joking about the haunted ticker. It wasn't any secret that Henry had given an order every time a signal had come over it; and it wasn't any secret either that Henry was making money, lots of money. He came to the office in a big sedan driven by a liveried chauffeur whom he kept waiting in the cold until he was ready to go. He had bought himself a fur coat — Russian sable — and he began to sport diamonds, little, unobtrusive ones weighing eight or ten carats each. In the face of such material evidences of success the signals over the ticker ceased to be funny.

"I mentioned that Henry had covered his shorts at the exact bottom of the November break. He had bought — bought heavily — at bargain-counter prices. The market started gently upward. The ticker spelled out 'A G Q Q.' Henry walked into my office, fully aware that every one of the other customers was watching him enviously, and ordered me to double up — to buy well over a hundred thousand shares of stock. For the first time since I had been doing business for him, his trading had an emphatic effect upon the market. Prices rose while Henry's orders were being executed. Then they dropped off again. He didn't like that but he was too busy writing out buying orders to kick about it. Half a dozen signals came over the ticker that day.

"Once during the afternoon I looked around the room and missed Foster. 'Where's the kid?' I asked.

" 'Don't you know? He's opened an account with Whitcomb.'

"He blew in a few minutes later looking fresh as a daisy. 'Hello, Mr. Bradish,' he said; 'stopped in to pay a friendly call.'

"He glued himself to the ticker, opposite Henry, and he never left it except when the steady clatter gave place to the queer, high-pitched buzz and one of the weird four-letter combinations came out. When that happened Henry would march into my office and Foster would trot across the hall to Whitcomb's.

"These things happened at the end of November and the beginning of December. I waited for the market to go up. I wasn't bullish; as a matter of fact I was looking for trouble. But the market had never failed to go up when Henry wanted it to.

"For the first time it disappointed him. There were no halfway measures about it, either. The market started down as if it had a long way to go and was in a hurry to get there. No 'sidewise movements;' no 'irregular declines;' nothing but break, break, break, followed by smash, smash, smash! Prices didn't fall; they just collapsed.

"Henry stood it well enough at the beginning. When you have a five-million-dollar balance you don't mind a few points' punishment; your pile is so big that nothing can dent it seriously. Then the few points began to grow to many points and Henry, who was never a good sport, began to lose his temper frequently. You couldn't speak to him without getting a surly reply. His chauffeur ventured to mention the stock market and he fired him on the spot.

"Henry drifted in to see me around the tenth of the month. 'Bradish,' he almost wailed, 'when's this going to end?'

"'Ask me something easier, Henry.'

"'What's your personal opinion?'

"I paid him back in his own coin. 'Henry,' I said, 'I'm a broker. My business is to execute orders.'

"'I've followed the code correctly,' he whined. He fished it out of his pocket. 'Look, I haven't made a single mistake. Just look.'

"'Henry,' I said emphatically, 'I'd just as lief not see it.'

"He stamped out of my office and planted himself at the ticker again.

"I kept my eye on Foster during those days. The kid was quiet — very quiet — you could hardly get a word out of him. 'How are things going?' I asked him once.

"'As well as can be expected, Mr. Bradish,' he assured me.

"'I hope so, Bill.' I meant it, too.

"The morning of Monday, the thirteenth, the ticker started that funny high-pitched buzz five minutes before the opening of the market. Henry, who was watching it, came in to see me, oozing relief at every pore.

"'Thank God,' he said; 'thank God, I was right!' He shoved half a dozen buying orders over my desk.

"I looked them over. 'Henry,' I asked, 'you want to buy all this stock?'

"'Yes; every share of it.'

"'You're carrying a tremendous line already.'

"'Well, what of that?' He was cocky again.

"'Only this; your margins are spread pretty thin.'

"'They'll carry this too, won't they?'

"'They'll just carry it. If there should be a decline —'

"He interrupted: 'There won't be a decline.'

"I persisted: 'If there should be a decline you'll be in an awkward position.'

"'Bradish,' he said, 'that's my business. I'm betting on Uncle Jonas.'

"I shrugged my shoulders and had his orders executed." Bradish stopped.

"Monday, December 13th —"

"Nineteen-twenty," supplemented Bradish.

"I don't remember the date. What happened?"

"Nothing much," said Bradish; "the market only went to hell.

"That night I figured up Henry's account myself. It was a well-distributed account; he owned ten or fifteen thousand shares of every lemon on the list. The worse the stock the more he owned of it. It was what you might call a financial chamber of horrors; there wasn't a single flivver that Henry had missed.

"By and by I struck a balance. It was appalling. Henry's five millions had shrunk — good Lord, how they'd shrunk! More than half had evaporated into thin air. I sent him a polite note asking him to deposit three millions of additional collateral — I knew he didn't have it — and I gave orders to start selling him out Tuesday morning. I had no choice; I had to do that or go broke myself.

"Henry was in early the next morning.

"So you've gone back on me!" he said.

"Henry," I said, "it would take the United States treasury to finance your operations. I haven't got that much money."

"Stocks will go up again!"

"Maybe. And maybe they won't."

"Have you lost faith in Uncle Jonas?"

"Henry," I said as gently as I could, "perhaps you ought to call him Uncle Jonah."

"I spent that week trying to put Henry's financial house in order, while he cursed every time I sold a share of stock. It was heartbreaking. I didn't dare sell a little at a time; the market was dropping too fast and every time I put in a sizable selling order it dropped even faster. Do you remember when some stocks started sliding off ten and fifteen points between sales? They were Henry's. The banks threw them out of their loans and I had to sell them for whatever they'd fetch. Henry had over two millions to his credit when we started that awful week. He had half a million left when we finished it. The rest had gone up in smoke. If I hadn't sold what I did he'd have been wiped out — blown off the map — erased. Was he grateful? Not Henry. He called me every name in his vocabulary and when he used them up he started putting them together in groups of two and three and he called me those.

"Foster was in and out of the office every day that week. He looked a little pale around the gills, I thought. I didn't dare ask him how he was making out. He must have read my thoughts because he edged over to me one afternoon and whispered, 'All right so far.'

"You mean it, Bill?"

"The kid nodded: 'There's a silver lining to every cloud.'

"'Yes; but sometimes it takes long to show itself.'

"'I'm patient,' said Foster. He walked off.

"A game kid! What?

"I made up my mind to have a heart-to-heart talk with Henry Saturday afternoon. I was going to tell him to take what he had left and quit. I was going to say that half a million was a lot of money for Watertown, New York; he could go back home and be the rich man of the place. I never got a chance. Henry yelled at me, raved, swore, wouldn't let me open my mouth. He would have hit me if he'd dared. Finally he slammed my door so hard that he smashed the glass, and left the office."

Bradish paused and sighed.

"Monday, the twentieth, and Tuesday, the twenty-first, were the end of Henry. What had come before was child's play to what happened then. The bottom dropped out of everything — no, there just wasn't any bottom. Tuesday noon Henry had five thousand shares left and fifty thousand dollars to carry them. I advised him to stick it. I told him I'd see him through no matter what happened.

"He turned on me in a fury, told me I was an ass not to have sold him out a week before and wrote out a selling order for the five thousand shares himself. I sold them at the exact bottom.

"That afternoon, around two-thirty, I came to Henry with a check. I had made it an even fifty thousand; even though I had to dip into my own pocket to make up the amount. I handed it to him and at that precise instant the ticker started that funny buzzing and I heard 'Click — click — click — click!'

"We all rushed to it. We didn't know it then but we were looking at the last signal it ever printed: 'S T T X.'

"Henry read it, scrawled his name across the back of the check, gave it back to me, and said, 'Sell five thousand Crucible.' Everybody in the room heard it.

"'But Henry — Henry ——' I ejaculated.

"'You heard my order! Sell!' he piped."

Bradish paused. "During the next six weeks Crucible went up only a little more than thirty points. With it went Henry's fifty thousand and his sable coat and his automobile and his diamond rings — and everything. He had walked into my office, penniless, in January, 1920. He walked out of it, penniless, in January, 1921."

"And Foster; what happened to Foster?"

Bradish laughed. "The kid strolled into my office one day early in the new year.

"'Howdy,' he said.



"I looked him over from head to foot. 'For a loser you're looking pretty spry.'

"'Loser? Why, Mr. Bradish, where did you ever get that idea?'

"'Bill,' I gasped, 'break it to me gently; have you got *anything* left?'

"The kid plunked down Whitcomb's certified check for an amount that made my eyes stick out. 'Bill, Bill,' I begged, 'how did you do it?'

"'Easiest thing in the world,' said Foster. 'I learned Uncle Jonas' language and then when I knew it I coppered his tips.'

"'Coppered his tips!'

"'Sold when he told me to buy and bought when he told me to sell; yes.'

"'But why — why —'

"The kid walked over to the window and looked down into the churchyard. 'He always got mad when I was on the right side of the fence and he was always so friendly when I wasn't. I figured he wouldn't change that part of his system.'

Bradish looked at me with a smile. "In that other world to which Uncle Jonas had gone perhaps he acquired a truer perspective on life. Perhaps his eyes were opened to a few things. Who knows? I hope you got the fine points," he suggested; "he broke his worthless nephew and paid his debt to young Foster at one and the same time."

"Yes, I got that."

"He handled Henry just right. Henry had resolved not to speculate. Jonas knew just how to break that resolution. Then he lifted him up to a pinnacle — a dizzy pinnacle — and smashed him."

"Bradish," I ventured, "did it ever occur to you that the whole thing may have been unintentional — that Grierson's system may have gone wrong?"

"It occurred to me but it's not worth discussing. If Jonas Grierson overcame the one colossal obstacle of communicating with the world he had just left, then other obstacles — such little things as beating Wall Street — must have been child's play for him. Grierson's system didn't go wrong, you can depend upon that." He smiled. "Anyhow, that's what I like to believe."

"There's one thing you haven't explained," I said slowly, "and that's the thing that interested me most: Henry — and the tape measure — and the pall on the grave and that absurd performance of changing the palls."

Bradish laughed. "That's the one thing that's supremely simple. Naturally I wanted to find out who sent the signals, how they were sent, everything about them. I hired Halford, the cleverest electrical engineer I knew, to investigate.

"Halford traced the circuits leading to the haunted ticker and he found that where the conduit passed Trinity churchyard — not more than a few

yards from Jonas' grave — the insulation had rubbed off two adjoining wires. They'd expand with heat and contract with cold and sometimes they'd touch. The jarring from the subway trains would account for the rest. That was Halford's explanation.

"Needless to say that explanation didn't suit Henry. He wanted something more fanciful, and by Jove, he got it. Halford was clever, but he was crooked too. This happened during December; Henry still had a little money and Halford was after the pickings.

"He spun Henry a preposterous yarn about radio, pointed out that the conduits passed near the grave, and told him a lot of rot about inductive effects and the messages the old man might impress upon the wires that passed so near him."

"And the pall?"

"That was Halford's crowning invention. He suggested that when Jonas wanted to send a signal he needed an antenna. The pall was a mass of wires; that served his purpose.

"Henry swallowed the yarn — hook, line and sinker. He found out that Foster had been seen at the grave. It struck him that the kid might have changed the connections. He got Halford to investigate. He kept him investigating just as long as his money lasted. He tried a second pall and a third one. He tried moving them up and down, right and left. I promised faithfully to send him word the instant that a signal came over the ticker. That was two years ago and I've had no word to send him."

"And what did Foster think about it?"

Bradish chuckled. "Foster's given up speculating. Like Henry, he made a resolution. Then he married a girl who sees that he keeps it. But Foster hasn't lost interest; he's opened an account for Henry with the best florist in town. Whenever Henry wants to experiment Foster pays for the pall."



*With this story we introduce a new character who's bound, we feel sure, to become a noted figure in the annals of American folk-fantasy: the wandering minstrel name of John, who strings his guitar with silver and who knows that evil and incomprehensible events can happen as well today as in the olden times whose ballads he knows by heart. John's creator, the unreconstructed and irregular Manly Wade Wellman, is a mean hand with a guitar ("nothing fancy or Segovian," he writes us, "just plain old country git-fiddle stuff, like Purty Quadroon and I'm Just a Rebel Soldier"); he knows the idiom and the folklore and the balladry of the South. And out of his knowledge he's fused a new kind of fantasy story, a sort of prose ballad. You'll remember this first meeting with John — and be glad to learn that he'll appear in F&SF soon again.*

## O Ugly Bird!

by MANLY WADE WELLMAN

I SWEAR I'm licked before I start, trying to tell you all what Mr. Onselm looked like. Words give out — for instance, you're frozen to death for fit words to tell the favor of the girl you love. And Mr. Onselm and I pure poison hated each other. That's how love and hate are alike.

He was what country folks call a low man, more than calling him short or small; a low man is low otherwise than by inches. Mr. Onselm's shoulders didn't wide out as far as his big ears, and they sank and sagged. His thin legs bowed in at the knee and out at the shank, like two sickles point to point. On his carrot-thin neck, his head looked like a swollen pale gourd. Thin, moss-gray hair. Loose mouth, a bit open to show long, even teeth. Not much chin. The right eye squinted, mean and dark, while the hike of his brow twitched the left one wide. His good clothes fitted his mean body like they were cut to it. Those good clothes were almost as much out of match to the rest of him as his long, soft, pink hands, the hands of a man who never had to work a tap.

You see what I mean, I can't say how he looked, only he was hateful.

I first met him when I came down from the high mountain's comb, along an animal trail — maybe a deer made it. Through the trees I saw, here and there in the valley below, patch-places and cabins and yards. I hoped I'd

get fed at one of them, for I'd run clear out of eating some spell back. I had no money. Only my hickory shirt and blue duckin pants and torn old army shoes, and my guitar on its sling cord. But I knew the mountain folks. If they've got ary thing to eat, a decent spoken stranger can get the half part of it. Towns aren't always the same way.

Downslope I picked, favoring the guitar in case I slipped and fell, and in an hour made it to the first patch. Early fall was browning the corn out of the green. The cabin was two-room, dog-trotted open in the middle. Beyond was a shed and a pigpen. In the yard the man of the house talked to who I found out later was Mr. Onselm.

"No meat at all?" said Mr. Onselm. His voice was the last you'd expect him to have, full of broad low music, like an organ in a town church. I decided against asking him to sing when I glimpsed him closer, sickle-legged and gourd-headed and pale and puny in his fine-fitting clothes. For he looked mad and dangerous; and the man of the place, though he was a big, strong old gentleman with a square jaw, looked afraid.

"I been short this year, Mr. Onselm," he said, begging like. "The last bit of meat I fished out of the brine on Tuesday. And I don't want to have to kill the pig till December."

Mr. Onselm tramped over to the pen. The pig was a friendly one, it reared its front feet against the boards and grunted up to him. Mr. Onselm spit into the pen. "All right," he said, "but I want some meal."

He sickle-legged back to the cabin. A brown barrel stood in the dog trot. Mr. Onselm lifted the cover and pinched some meal between his pink fingertips. "Get me a sack," he told the man.

The man went indoors and brought out the sack. Mr. Onselm held it open while the man scooped out meal enough to fill it. Then Mr. Onselm held it tight shut while the man lashed the neck with twine. Finally Mr. Onselm looked up and saw me standing there.

"Who are you?" he asked, sort of crooning.

"My name's John," I said.

"John what?" Then, without waiting for my answer, "Where did you steal that guitar?"

"It was given to me," I replied. "I strung it with silver wires myself."

"Silver," he said, and opened his squint eye by a trifle.

With my left hand I clamped a chord. With my right thumb I picked a whisper from the silver strings. I began to make a song:

"Mister Onselm,  
They do what you tell 'em —"

"That will do," said Mr. Onselm, not so musically, and I stopped playing.

He relaxed. "They do what I tell 'em," he said, half to himself. "Not bad."

We studied each other a few ticks of time. Then he turned and tramped out of the yard in among the trees. When he was out of sight the man of the place asked, right friendly, what he could do for me.

"I'm just walking through," I said. I didn't want to ask right off for some dinner.

"I heard you name yourself John," he said. "So happens my name's John too, John Bristow."

"Nice place you've got," I said, looking around. "Cropper or tenant?"

"I own the house and the land," he told me, and I was surprised; for Mr. Onselm had treated him the way a mean boss treats a cropper.

"Then that Mr. Onselm was just a visitor," I said.

"Visitor?" Mr. Bristow snorted. "He visits everybody here around. Lets them know what he wants, and they pass it to him. Thought you knew him, you sang about him so ready."

"Shucks, I made that up." I touched the silver strings again. "I sing a many a new song that comes to me."

"I love the old songs better," he said, and smiled, so I sang one:

"I had been in Georgia  
Not a many more weeks than three,  
When I fell in love with a pretty fair girl,  
And she fell in love with me.  
"Her lips were red as red could be,  
Her eyes were brown as brown,  
Her hair was like the thundercloud  
Before the rain comes down."

You should have seen Mr. Bristow's face shine. He said: "By God, you sure enough can sing it and play it."

"Do my possible best," I said. "But Mr. Onselm don't like it." I thought a moment, then asked: "What way can he get everything he wants in this valley?"

"Shoo, can't tell you way. Just done it for years, he has."

"Anybody refuse him?"

"Once Old Jim Desbro refused him a chicken. Mr. Onselm pointed his finger at Old Jim's mules, they was plowing. Them mules couldn't move ary foot, not till Mr. Onselm had the chicken. Another time, Miss Tilly Parmer hid a cake when she seen him come. He pointed a finger and dumbbed her. She never spoke one mumbling word from that day to when she died. Could hear and understand, but when she tried to talk she could just wheeze."

"He's a hoodoo man," I said, "which means the law can't do anything."

"Not even if the law worried about anything this far from the county seat." He looked at the meal back against the cabin. "About time for the Ugly Bird to fetch Mr. Onselm's meal."

"What's the Ugly Bird?" I asked, but he didn't have to answer.

It must have hung over us, high and quiet, and now it dropped into the yard like a fish hawk into a pond.

First out I saw it was dark, heavy-winged, bigger than a buzzard. Then I saw the shiny gray-black of the body, like wet slate, and how it seemed to have feathers only on its wide wings. Then I made out the thin snaky neck, the bulgy head and long stork beak, the eyes set in front of its head — man-fashion in front, not to each side.

The feet that taloned onto the sack showed pink and smooth with five graspy toes. The wings snapped like a tablecloth in a wind, and it churned away over the trees with the meal sack.

"That's the Ugly Bird," said Mr. Bristow. I barely heard him. "Mr. Onselm has companioned with it ever since I recollect."

"I never saw such a bird," I said. "Must be a scarce one. You know what struck me while I watched it?"

"I do know, John. Its feet look like Mr. Onselm's hands."

"Might it be," I asked, "that a hoodoo man like Mr. Onselm knows what way to shape himself into a bird?"

He shook his head. "It's known that when he's at one place, the Ugly Bird's been sighted at another." He tried to change the subject. "Silver strings on your guitar — never heard of any but steel strings."

"In the olden days," I told him, "silver was used a many times for strings. It gives a more singy sound."

In my mind I had it the subject wouldn't be changed. I tried a chord on my guitar, and began to sing:

"You all have heard of the Ugly Bird  
So curious and so queer,  
That flies its flight by day and night  
And fills folks' hearts with fear.

"I never come here to hide from fear,  
And I give you my promised word  
That I soon expect to twist the neck  
Of the God damn Ugly Bird."

When I finished, Mr. Bristow felt in his pocket.

"I was going to bid you eat with me," he said, "but — here, maybe you better buy something."

He gave me a quarter and a dime. I about gave them back, but I thanked him and walked away down the same trail Mr. Onselm had gone. Mr. Bristow watched me go, looking shrunk up. My song had scared him, so I kept singing it.

"O Ugly Bird! O Ugly Bird!  
You snoop and sneak and thief!  
This place can't be for you and me,  
And one of us got to leave."

Singing, I tried to remember all I'd heard or read or guessed that might help toward my Ugly Bird study.

Didn't witch people have partner animals? I'd read and heard tell about the animals called familiars — mostly cats or black dogs or the like, but sometimes birds.

That might be the secret, or a right much of it, for the Ugly Bird wasn't Mr. Onselm's other self. Mr. Bristow had said the two of them were seen different places at one time. Mr. Onselm didn't turn into the Ugly Bird then. They were just close partners. Brothers. With the Ugly Bird's feet like Mr. Onselm's hands.

I awared of something in the sky, the big black V of a flying creature. It quartered over me, half as high as the highest woolly scrap of cloud. Once or twice it seemed like it would stoop for me, like a hawk for a rabbit, but it didn't. Looking up and letting my feet find the trail, I rounded a bunch of bushes and there, on a rotten log in a clearing, sat Mr. Onselm.

His gourd-head sank on his thin neck. His elbows set on his knees, and the soft, pink, long hands hid his face, as if he was miserable. His look made me feel disgusted. I came toward him.

"You don't feel so brash, do you?" I asked.

"Go away," he sort of gulped, soft and sick.

"Why?" I wanted to know. "I like it here." Sitting on the log, I pulled my guitar across me. "I feel like singing, Mr. Onselm."

"His father got hung for horse stealing,  
His mother got burned for a witch,  
And his only friend is the Ugly Bird,  
The dirty son of —"

Something hit me like a shooting star from overhead.

It hit my back and shoulder, and knocked me floundering forward on one hand and one knee. It was only the mercy of God I didn't fall on my guitar and smash it. I crawled forward a few scrambles and made to get up, shaky and dizzy.

The Ugly Bird had flown down and dropped the sack of meal on me. Now it skimmed across the clearing, at the height of the low branches, its eyes glinting at me, and its mouth came open a little. I saw teeth, sharp and mean, like a garpike's teeth. It swooped for me, and the wind of its wings was colder than a winter storm.

Without stopping to think, I flung up my both hands to box it off from me, and it gave back, flew backward like the biggest, devilishest humming bird ever seen in a nightmare. I was too dizzy and scared to wonder why it gave back; I had barely the wit to be thankful.

"Get out of here," moaned Mr. Onselm, who hadn't stirred.

I shame to say that I got. I kept my hands up and backed across the clearing and into the trail beyond. Then I half realized where my luck had been. My hands had lifted the guitar toward the Ugly Bird, and somehow it hadn't liked the guitar.

Just once I looked back. The Ugly Bird was perching on the log and it sort of nuzzled up to Mr. Onselm, most horrible. They were sure enough close together. I stumbled off away.

I found a stream, with stones to make steps across. I turned and walked down to where it made a wide pool. There I knelt and washed my face — it looked pallid in the water image — and sat with my back to a tree and hugged my guitar and rested. I shook all over. I must have felt as bad for a while as Mr. Onselm looked like he felt, sitting on the log waiting for his Ugly Bird and — what else?

Had he been hungry? Sick? Or just evil? I couldn't say which.

After a while I walked back to the trail and along it again, till I came to what must have been the only store thereabouts.

It faced one way on a rough road that could carry wagon and car traffic, and the trail joined on and reached the door. The building wasn't big but it was good, made of sawed planks well painted. It rested on big rocks instead of posts, and had a roofed open front like a porch, with a bench where people could sit.

Opening the door, I went in. You'll find a many such stores in back country places through the land. Counters. Shelves of cans and packages. Smoked meat hung one corner, a glass-front icebox for fresh meat another. One point, sign says U. S. POST OFFICE, with half a dozen pigeonholes for letters and a couple of cigar boxes for stamps and money-order blanks. The proprietor wasn't in. Only a girl, scared and shaking, and Mr. Onselm, there ahead of me, telling her what he wanted.

He wanted her.

"I don't care if Sam Heaver did leave you in charge here," he said with the music in his voice. "He won't stop my taking you with me."



Then he swung around and fixed his squint eye and wide-open eye on me, like two mismated gun muzzles. "You again," he said.

He looked hale and hearty. I strayed my hands over the guitar strings, and he twisted up his face as if it colicked him.

"Winnie," he said to the girl, "wait on him and get him out of here."

Her eyes were round in her scared face. I never saw as sweet a face as hers, or as scared. Her hair was dark and thick. It was like the thundercloud before the rain comes down. It made her paleness look paler. She was small, and she cowered for fear of Mr. Onselm.

"Yes, sir?" she said to me.

"Box of crackers," I decided, pointing to a near shelf. "And a can of those sardine fish."

She put them on the counter. I dug out the quarter Mr. Bristow had given me, and slapped it down on the counter top between the girl and Mr. Onselm.

"Get away!" he squeaked, shrill and mean as a bat. He had jumped back, almost halfway across the floor. And for once both of his eyes were big.

"What's the matter?" I asked him, purely wondering. "This is a good silver quarter." And I picked it up and held it out for him to take and study.

But he ran out of the store like a rabbit. A rabbit with the dogs after it.

The girl he'd called Winnie just leaned against the wall as if she was tired. I asked: "Why did he light out like that?"

She took the quarter. "It doesn't scare me much," she said, and rung it up on the old cash register. "All that scares me is — Mr. Onselm."

I picked up the crackers and sardines. "He's courting you?"

She shuddered, though it was warm. "I'd sooner be in a hole with a snake than be courted by Mr. Onselm."

"Why not just tell him to leave you be?"

"He'd not listen. He always does what pleases him. Nobody dares stop him."

"I know, I heard about the mules he stopped and the poor lady he dumbed." I returned to the other subject. "Why did he squinch away from money? I'd reckon he loved money."

She shook her head. The thundercloud hair stirred. "He never needs any. Takes what he wants without paying."

"Including you?"

"Not including me yet. But he'll do that later."

I laid down my dime I had left. "Let's have a coke drink, you and me."

She rang up the dime too. There was a sort of dry chuckle at the door, like a stone rattling down the well. I looked quick, and saw two long, dark wings flop away from the door. The Ugly Bird had spied.

But the girl Winnie smiled over her coke drink. I asked permission to open my fish and crackers on the bench outside. She nodded yes. Out there, I worried open the can with my pocket knife and had my meal. When I finished I put the trash in a garbage barrel and tuned my guitar. Winnie came out and harked while I sang about the girl whose hair was like the thundercloud before the rain comes down, and she blushed till she was pale no more.

Then we talked about Mr. Onselm and the Ugly Bird, and how they had been seen in two different places at once —

"But," said Winnie, "who's seen them together?"

"Shoo, I have," I told her. "Not long ago." And I told how Mr. Onselm sat, all sick and miserable, and the conjer bird crowded up against him.

She heard all that, with eyes staring off, as if looking for something far away. Finally she said, "John, you say it crowded up to him."

"It did that thing, as if it studied to get right inside him."

"Inside him!"

"That's right."

"Makes me think of something I heard somebody say about hoodoo folks," she said. "How the hoodoo folks sometimes put a stuff out, mostly in dark rooms. And it's part of them, but it takes the shape and mind of another person — once in a while, the shape and mind of an animal."

"Shoo," I said again, "now you mention it, I've heard the same thing. It might explain those Louisiana stories about werewolves."

"Shape and mind of an animal," she repeated herself. "Maybe the shape and mind of a bird. And they call it echo — no, ecto — ecto —"

"Ectoplasm," I remembered. "That's right. I've even seen pictures they say were taken of such stuff. It seems to live — it'll yell, if you grab it or hit it or stab it."

"Could maybe —" she began, but a musical voice interrupted.

"He's been around here long enough," said Mr. Onselm.

He was back. With him were three men. Mr. Bristow, and a tall, gawky man with splay shoulders and a black-stubbed chin, and a soft, smooth-grizzled man with an old fancy vest over his white shirt.

Mr. Onselm acted like the leader of a posse. "Sam Heaven," he crooned at the soft, grizzled one, "can tramps loaf at your store?"

The soft old storekeeper looked dead and gloomy at me. "Better get going, son," he said, as if he'd memorized it.

I laid my guitar on the bench. "You men ail my stomach," I said, looking at them. "You let this half-born, half-bred hoodoo man sic you on me like hound dogs when I'm hurting nobody and nothing."

"Better go," he said again.

I faced Mr. Onselm, and he laughed like a sweetly played horn. "You," he said, "without a dime in your pocket! You can't do anything to anybody."

Without a dime . . . the Ugly Bird had seen me spend my silver money, the silver money that ailed Mr. Onselm. . . .

"Take his guitar, Hobe," said Mr. Onselm, and the gawky man, clumsy but quick, grabbed the guitar from the bench and backed away to the door.

"That takes care of him," Mr. Onselm sort of purred, and he fairly jumped and grabbed Winnie by the wrist. He pulled her along toward the trail, and I heard her whimper.

"Stop him!" I bawled, but they stood and looked, scared and dumb. Mr. Onselm, still holding Winnie, faced me. He lifted his free hand, with the pink forefinger sticking out like the barrel of a pistol.

Just the look he gave me made me weary and dizzy. He was going to hoodoo me, like he'd done the mules, like he'd done the woman who tried to hide her cake from him. I turned from him, sick and afraid, and I heard him giggle, thinking he'd won already. In the doorway stood the gawky man called Hobe, with the guitar.

I made a long jump at him and started to wrestle it away from him.

"Hang onto it, Hobe," I heard Mr. Onselm sort of choke out, and, from Mr. Bristow:

"There's the Ugly Bird!"

Its wings flapped like a storm in the air behind me. But I'd torn my guitar from Hobe's hands and turned on my heel.

A little way off, Mr. Onselm stood stiff and straight as a stone figure in front of a courthouse. He still held Winnie's wrist. Between them the Ugly Bird came swooping at me, its beak pointing for me like a stabbing bayonet.

I dug in my toes and smashed the guitar at it. Full-slam I struck its bulgy head above the beak and across the eyes, and I heard the polished wood of my music-maker crash to splinters.

And down went the Ugly Bird!

Down it went.

Quiet it lay.

Its great big wings stretched out on either side, without a flutter. Its beak was driven into the ground like a nail. It didn't kick or flop or stir once.

But Mr. Onselm, standing where he stood holding Winnie, screamed out the way you might scream if something had clawed out all your insides with a single tearing grab.

He didn't move, I don't even know if his mouth came open. Winnie gave a pull with all her strength and tottered back, clear of him. And as if only

his hold on her had kept him standing, Mr. Onselm slapped over and down on his face, his arms flung out like the Ugly Bird's wings, his face in the dirt like the Ugly Bird's face.

Still holding my broken guitar by the neck like a club, I ran to him and stooped. "Get up," I said, and took hold of what hair he had and lifted his face up.

One look was enough. From the war, I know a dead man when I see one. I let go his hair, and his face went back into the dirt as if it belonged there.

The others moved at last, tottering a few steps closer. And they didn't act like enemies now, for Mr. Onselm who had made them act so was down and dead.

Then Hobe gave a scared shout, and we looked that way.

The Ugly Bird all of a sudden looked rotten mushy, and was soaking into the ground. To me, anyhow, it looked shadowy and misty, and I could see through it. I wanted to move close, then I didn't want to. It was melting away like snow on top of a stove; only no wetness left behind.

It was gone, while we watched and wondered and felt bad all over.

Mr. Bristow knelt and turned Mr. Onselm over. On the dead face ran sick lines across, thin and purple, as though he'd been struck down by a blow of a toaster or a gridiron.

"The guitar strings," said Mr. Bristow. "The silver guitar strings. It finished him, like any hoodoo man."

That was it. Won't a silver bullet kill a witch, or a silver knife a witch's cat? And a silver key locks out ghosts, doesn't it?

"What was the word you said?" whispered Winnie to me.

"Ectoplasm," I told her. "Like his soul coming out — and getting struck dead outside his body."

More important was talk about what to do now. The men decided. They allowed to report to the county seat that Mr. Onselm's heart had stopped on him, which it had. They went over the tale three or four times to make sure they'd all tell it the same. They cheered up as they talked. You never saw gladder people to get rid of a neighbor.

"And, John," said Mr. Bristow, "we'd sure enough be proud if you stayed here. You took this curse off us."

Hobe wanted me to come live on his farm and help him work it on shares. Sam Heaver offered me all the money out of his old cash register. I thanked him and said no, sir, to Hobe I said thank you kindly, I'd better not. If they wanted their story to stick with the sheriff, they'd better forget that I'd been around when Mr. Onselm's heart stopped. All I was sorry for was my broken guitar.

But while we'd talked, Mr. Bristow was gone. He came back, with a

guitar from his place, and he acted honored if I'd take it in place of mine. So I tightened my silver strings on it and tried a chord or two.

Winnie swore she'd pray for me by name each night of her life, and I told her that would sure see me safe from any assaults of the devil.

"Assaults of the devil, John!" she said, almost shrill in the voice, she was so earnest. "It's you who drove the devil from this valley."

The others all said they agreed on that.

"It was foretold about you in the Bible," said Winnie, her voice soft again. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John."

But that was far too much for her to say, and I was that abashed, I said goodbye all around in a hurry. I strummed my new guitar as I walked away, until I got an old song back in my mind. I've heard tell that the song's written in an old-time book called *Percy's Frolics*, or *Relics*, or something:

"Lady, I never loved witchcraft,  
Never dealt in privy wile,  
But evermore held the high way  
Of love and honor, free from guile. . . ."

And though I couldn't bring myself to look back to the place I was leaving forever, I knew that Winnie watched me, and that she listened, listened, till she had to strain her ears to catch the last, faintest end of my song.



## Note:

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*Normally, fiction is based upon the conflict of characters; but there's a great tradition, from ROBINSON CRUSOE to Carl Stephenson's Leiningen versus the Ants, in which one single character pits all his own strength and intelligence against extra-human forces. It's in this tradition that the coming young writer Arthur Porges makes his first appearance in F&SF. Mr. Porges teaches mathematics at DePaul University, Chicago, and has been writing fiction for little more than a year; in The Rats (reprinted from Man's World for February, 1951), we think he's achieved a model of detailed ingenuity and suspense.*

## The Rats

by ARTHUR PORGES

HE CUDDLED the stock against his shoulder, lined up the ivory bead, and squeezed the trigger. He heard the smack of the hollow-point against wood, and swore, his imprecations echoing hollowly down the dark, empty streets.

Jeffrey Clark expected no reply to his oaths, and got none. The silent village had been evacuated months before because of dangerous radioactivity from the adjoining proving ground for atomic weapons, now also abandoned.

Clark was a physicist, and understood perfectly that the government could not take chances. He knew that present radiation was quite harmless a short distance from the firing range, and there were excellent reasons for remaining here after the jerry-built settlement was evacuated.

In this region, wasteland to begin with, and now forbidden by law, a man would be safe. What enemy, he reasoned, cared to waste a gram of fissionable material on such a locality? Further, when the bombs fell, an eventuality he believed imminent, there would be no panicky mobs to pillage his supplies, menace his life blindly, and, in short, ruin his slender chance for survival.

There was a large store of food in his house, carefully built up during the three-year period when he worked on the proving ground. A small spring provided the only dependable supply of water within hundreds of square miles of desert; the government had left behind dozens

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of large drums of gasoline, as well as tons of miscellaneous equipment; and Clark was tough enough psychologically to make a good fight of it alone.

The only annoyance — at present, he rated it no higher — was the rats. With the abandonment of the village, they had found themselves short of food. Unable to follow the inhabitants across a pitiless desert, they were in a hopeless predicament. How they had arrived in the first place was a minor mystery to the physicist, but he surmised that a few pairs had been hidden in the huge shipments of material; certainly the once-numerous mice, now almost exterminated by their large cousins, had come that way.

In any case, Clark was more interested in their future than their past, for he was finding it difficult to protect his possessions, especially the priceless food, against their inroads.

True, he had the .22 rifle and a large quantity of high-power shells, but the rats were no longer easy targets. Strange as it seemed to him at first, he was convinced they had learned to duck at the flash, like veteran infantrymen. He often bemoaned his blindness in failing to provide rat-traps, but it was too late, now. Any contact with the outer world was definitely taboo. He had no wish either to share his retreat or to be conscripted for the Armageddon which lay a few calendar leaves ahead.

Blowing into the chamber of his gun, Clark returned moodily to the house. Something had to be done. With all his skill, he hadn't shot a rat in days, and the big albino that had just escaped had certainly been a perfect target. And in spite of the food scarcity, they still swarmed in great numbers throughout the town. Either they fed on each other, or else they had learned to catch the ubiquitous lizards that crouched with gently-throbbing throats on every sunny surface.

"The question is," he muttered, filling a pipe, "do I concentrate on purely defensive measures, like rat-proofing this house, or take the offensive?" He had repeatedly plugged rat-holes with a mixture of cement and powdered glass, a mortar no rat cared to gnaw for long, but the enemy merely made new passages in the wooden dwelling.

Then, too, a number of minor incidents tended to make Clark uneasy. There was the hole, for example, which he had blocked with a sheet of tin. To his astonishment the rats had managed to strip away the metal, not by haphazard attacks, but through working directly on the tack-heads. Clark was no biologist, but he felt sure such intelligence was uncommon. For a moment he thought, idiotically enough, of a typical professional article: "Observations on an Unusually Adaptable Colony of —" what was the scientific name of the rat, again? "*Mus*" something. As if that mattered, with a world waiting for the assassin's blade. Anyhow, the explanation surely lay in the critical plight of the cunning rodents.

As he sat in the clear white glow of the gasoline lamp, puffing thoughtfully on his briar, a memory of childhood came to him, and he sat bolt upright.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "I should have thought of that sooner. Gramps used to get hundreds that way, out on the farm."

Filled with enthusiasm, he decided to begin at once, although it was late. Living alone, he cared little about clock time, preferring a more flexible, wholly subjective measure.

A brief search located a large, empty barrel, which he sunk in the ground for about two-thirds its depth. This he filled half full of water from the nearby spring. Then, with great care, he adjusted a long plank so that it led rampwise from the ground, over the barrel's rim, to a point directly above the water. A few well-placed nails kept the board from moving laterally, while permitting free motion vertically, see-saw fashion. By repeated trials, he arranged the plank so that even a small weight in addition to the bait would destroy the delicate balance, sharply dipping the upper end.

After some moments of self-debate, in which he tried to brighten a dim memory of childhood, he placed several rocks in the water so as to form a tiny island.

Then, with a grunt of satisfaction, he fastened some scraps of food to the high end, and, well-pleased, returned to his house.

The moon was shining with that metallic brightness so typical of the clear desert air, and in a highly anticipatory mood Clark seated himself by the window with a 7 x 50 nightglass in his hand. He had not long to wait. Almost immediately he could see through the powerful lenses a group of lithe, furtive forms converging on the barrel with its promise of food. A leading rat, after hesitating briefly on the lower edge of the ramp, crept cautiously towards the top. It had just reached the bait, and was about to attack it with savage hunger, when the balance shifted; the plank dipped in one swift motion, and with a despairing squeak the rodent was plunged into chilly water.

For several moments as it swam about, clawing vainly at the smooth sides and squealing its indignation, the other rats vanished, but when the victim scrambled aboard the rock island and continued to shriek for help, they quickly reassembled, drawn by irresistible curiosity.

To their surprise, the mysterious pathway had returned to its original position, lying invitingly before them. Their natural desire for food was supplemented now by a burning urge to know what was happening to their fellow, still keening loudly, but invisible; and before long a second rodent attempted the incline.

Clark roared with laughter as the board, working with the simple efficiency of perfect design, dropped a second rat into cold water!



Both rats were squealing now, long reedy cries of fear and rage. With diabolical intent, Clark had made the island large enough for only one rat, and a grim battle for possession began.

Excited by the cries, and unable to see what was happening, the free rats returned in hordes, and utterly reckless in their madness, dashed up the treacherous ramp. Only a few held back, among them the large albino, and before dawn Clark's barrèl-trap had swallowed fifteen rats, a record it maintained throughout the week.

It was on the tenth day that the situation changed.

Watching through his binoculars, Clark saw a rat hesitate on the lower edge, as usual. Another, close behind, impatiently shouldered by, quickly reaching the top, with its odorous bait. As the first rat still paused irresolutely below, the more daring one actually reached the food, tearing at it ravenously. This sight proved too much for the timid one, and it jealously rushed to join in the feast. With a double weight towards the top, the plank immediately hurled both animals to a watery death. Clark laughed at this byplay until his sides ached. The rats were so human in their reactions. Or should that be put in reverse, he wondered?

But ten minutes later something happened that wiped the smile from his lips. This time the albino took a hand, remaining calmly on the lower edge while a companion raced up the incline. At the top, the rat tore loose a large fragment of rancid bacon, and beat a nervous retreat. Clark could have sworn the animal looked positively relieved on reaching the ground again.

"Well, I'm damned!" Clark muttered. "Was that intentional or —!"

A few more nights' watching answered that question, and the barrèl claimed no more victims.

Although concerned by this setback, Clark was far from beaten. If traps — or at least this type — were futile, there still remained other methods. Poison, for example. An inventory of his supplies, however, proved discouraging. Beyond a small stock of medical drugs, there was not a grain of poison to be had. He made a few tentative trials with ground glass, but found, as a toxicologist had once insisted, that it was nearly harmless.

No, poison in the ordinary sense was out, but death by swallowing didn't necessarily mean chemicals or glass. Clark was thinking of a device often used by Eskimos against bears and foxes. It was simple and effective. You coiled a thin sliver of whalebone into a tight, small spiral, and froze it in a pellet of fat. When an animal swallowed such a lump, it soon thawed out; the deadly coil snapped open, and the sharp-pointed bone pierced the creature's vitals.

Of course, he wouldn't use whalebone, nor was freezing called for. Clark rummaged about in the miscellaneous supplies and found some stiff, springy wire. He cut it into three-inch lengths, which he wound, under heavy tension, to spirals no larger than beans. He made a quantity of such coils, all tied with thread. There wasn't much doubt, he decided, considering what rats ate, that the thread would quickly weaken in their digestive fluids. Then, bingo!

The results were heartening beyond his expectations. Concealed in pills of stale food, or small lumps of flour paste, the murderous spirals soon disposed of several dozen rats, and Clark began to hope that total extinction was possible.

On that score he was soon undeceived. These rats learned with amazing rapidity, and before long the pills mouldered away uneaten where he left them.

Meanwhile the creatures were bolder than ever. One night, after filling his dish with food, Clark stepped into the pantry for some salt. Almost immediately he heard a scuffling noise in the outer room, and feeling certain a rat was after his dinner, sprang out just in time to see a slinking white form slip oil-like under a heavy bookcase. It was the albino again, apparently a leader among the rodents. Clark angrily muscled the massive case aside, and sure enough, a freshly-gnawed passage gaped in the corner behind it. Swearing, he returned to the table, where as he ate, ideas for a new, intensive campaign were mentally marshalled and analyzed.

He was chewing a mouthful thoughtfully before swallowing it when his teeth grated on metal. He paled, fighting sudden almost overwhelming nausea. Then, very carefully, with fingers that shook, he removed from the back of his tongue a shattered pill of hard biscuit. Most of the shell had been stripped off by the action of teeth and moisture, leaving the terrible little spiral plainly visible.

Clark shuddered. But for the accident of teeth meeting metal, the small pellet might have been swallowed. There was no doctor for a hundred miles, and with three inches of sharp wire jammed into stomach or bowels — well, no rat could be more hopelessly doomed.

But that wasn't the point, now. How did the damned thing get on his plate? He had been extremely careful not to leave the tricky pills about. A man living alone learns to take every precaution against accidents of all sorts. Then he remembered the white rat. But that was absurd. Surely it hadn't deliberately dropped the pellet into his food. Rats were adaptable, and these exceptionally so, but this sort of human reasoning was as far beyond them as building a railroad.

When he had recovered his composure, Clark inspected the remaining

food minutely, but there were no more spirals. Nevertheless his appetite was gone, and leaving the table, he dropped into a chair, there to puff pensively on a pipe.

"If I only had a cat," he murmured, thinking longingly of the mighty, sandy Tom of his childhood. "Cap'n Kidd would make short work of this lousy vermin."

But it was useless to think of cats; action was called for, and quickly. What he needed, Clark felt, was a large, efficient trap that would shatter the whole rat colony at one blow. After that, cleaning up a few survivors might be possible before rodent fertility made good their losses.

There was a small, sturdy shed a hundred feet from the house, and Clark decided to use that. A careful inspection proved it to be eminently suitable, but just as a precaution, he reinforced it with boards here and there, stopped up a few rat holes, and placed tin sheathing at strategic points.

It was simple enough to build a heavy door that could be released from the house by a cord. He had it slide vertically in oiled grooves, dropping smoothly with great speed. Of course, it was a bit large, but that was no problem, and made inspection of the interior easy.

He wondered about a catch, but concluded no rat in the world could budge the weighty door once it fell. Still, these were remarkable animals, and he ought to play safe. After all, if this trap failed, there wasn't much more to try. An automatic lock was uncalled for, but there was no harm in having a pair of staples at the bottom, and a short stick to engage them. Not that the rats would have time to do much with all that dry wood piled about the shed ready for his match.

When everything was set, he placed a quantity of spoiled food in the shed, and returned to the house. It would take several days, he knew, before the harried rats would enter the suspicious structure freely, but their actual precautions were a revelation. Having succumbed in large numbers to the wire pills, the rats were unbelievably wary. From his window, Clark watched through binoculars, and for three days, as the animals came to the shed in dozens, he marvelled at their latest procedure.

Apparently a small group of the rodents were tasters, since before mass feeding began, they scouted the food piles, nibbling everywhere with excellent sampling technique. Only when these potential martyrs remained unharmed for a reasonable period of time, did the main body approach.

But tasters or not, they entered the shed, and by the fifth day in such hordes that Clark felt certain there were few holdouts.

During the late afternoon a week later, therefore, he made his final preparations, replenishing the food, adjusting the cord, and testing the sliding door. He was about to leave, well-satisfied, when sudden doubt assailed

him. Had he overlooked something? Yes, by George. Suppose the cunning rats had outwitted him by digging a few secret bolt-holes recently. What a fool he'd be, if after all this trouble he fired the locked shed only to have rats pour out of a dozen new holes. True, there was tin along most of the lower wall, and the floor was concrete, but with these rats it was best to make sure.

Stooping, he re-entered the shed, and began a painstaking examination of each metal sheet. While he was fingering the nail-heads, he heard a shuffling noise outside, accompanied by loud squeaks. He smiled sourly. The victims were already gathering for their last feast. The sounds grew louder; they came from the roof, too. He decided to step out and check up. The cord passed through a pulley there, and some rat might jam it — he was in a mood to believe they might do so intentionally, even if that seemed fantastic.

He had taken only one step towards the door, however, when it fell with a crash. Clark stopped in his tracks, swearing angrily. How had that happened? The catch was smooth-working, but still needed a reasonably hard tug on its cord. A hint of panic touched him. Could the rats have done the trapping? No, that was insane. Yet, if they could hold him here for even an hour, with his food unguarded — listen, they were at the door now. Well, he was no damned rat. One yank at the oiled door, and he'd be free. He dug his nails into the rough wood and tugged. The door rose smoothly half an inch, then stopped dead. Perspiration burned his eyes. He exerted all his strength. No dice. It was jammed, all right. He put one eye to a crack, trying to locate the trouble, and saw the great albino just outside. Raging, he peered through several slits before understanding. The short, thick dowel-rod he'd brought to engage the staples was neatly in place. The rats had locked him in. They were all about, and surely there was obscene triumph in their scurryings and squealings.

It was obvious he had completely underestimated them. Yet they had a lot to learn, he thought grimly, regaining his poise. This shed couldn't hold a man very long. He pulled out a heavy pocketknife, hesitated, then returned it, and instead, drew the long-barreled .22 automatic from his belt. A few well placed shots would splinter the door enough to let him reach that dowel-rod. He peered out again to locate the best point, and in the growing gloom saw a bobbing light, then another, and a third. For a moment he thought wonderingly of human aid, but these lights were almost at ground level. Then his heart pounded, and he saw all too plainly. They were rats, each with a flaming stick in its jaws. There was only one explanation now, that was certain. The sticks had been lit at his own gas lamp burning at home, and the motive was horribly clear.

Cursing, half sobbing, he battered frantically at the thick wood. He

fired until the gun was empty, but the light slugs only chewed up the door's surface, and in the ensuing silence he heard the crackling flames on three sides.

Abruptly he was calm, and the whole situation seemed humorously ironical as full comprehension came. These were not just highly adaptable rats. Everybody knew that radiation did strange things to living cells, and these creatures had been long exposed. No, they were no more rats than men were apes. These were intelligent, quick-learning mutants, and the huge albino was surely their leader.

Clark felt coolly in his pockets. Yes, a break at last. One bullet left. The heat was stifling; there wasn't much time. He raised the loaded gun to his temple, and above the roaring flames heard a detestable, reedy keening.

At that moment as he stood poised between life and death, there was a flash of light somewhere over the horizon, transient yet so intense the very walls of the shed seemed transparent. The ground quivered faintly, as if a premonitory shiver was running over the world, and far off rumblings sounded threateningly.

Penned up though he was, the physicist understood perfectly. Without being able to see it, he knew the inevitable mushroom was having its brief flowering, tall and sinister, yet a thing of urgent beauty to the dispassionate observer.

Clark sobbed dryly. The raw fibre of his brain was touched with acid. Twice his lips moved soundlessly, stickily, before he said softly, "That was It."

The heat was now utterly unbearable, and even the fate of a world was secondary. He raised his voice to a shout, addressing the squealing mutants outside.

"You out there!" he roared, cringing from the searching flames. "You win, damn you! You may be the only ones left this time next month. It's all yours now. And what the hell will *you* do with it?" Then he squeezed the trigger.



*The basis of the best fantasy is stern logic gone awry; and you'll remember Howard Schoenfeld as being singularly successful, in his Built Up Logically, at creating a world which, like that of Lewis Carroll or that of the Marx Brothers, has a madly plausible coherence of its own. In this latest anecdote, Mr. Schoenfeld has done it again; if logic has any meaning at all, this entire episode must have taken place precisely as he says.*

## Built Down Logically

by HOWARD SCHOENFELD

HILLBURT HOOPER ASPASIA sat in his baby buggy in a lecture hall at Harvard University where he was scheduled to deliver an address at commencement exercises. Seated in front of him were several thousand students. They whispered excitedly as they wondered what topic the young genius had chosen for his talk.

Hooper, leaning forward in his buggy, raised his hand for silence.

"I will discuss the origin of human intelligence today," Hooper said. "Does heredity determine the intelligence of human beings, or does environment? Or do both play a part in the development of this highly overrated phenomenon?"

"My contention is that intelligence is the result of the type of food we receive at a given time. My own case history proves it. I've become the world's most brilliant baby by living on a diet of crib slats and turnips."

Hooper paused. In the back of the hall two students fell to discussing Hooper's point.

"If what he says is true, then neither heredity nor environment plays a part in developing human intelligence," said one student.

"That's right," said the other.

It was natural for these two young men to overlook the point that diet is a part of environment as both were honor students, held Phi Beta Kappa keys, had been awarded all available scholastic honors, were considered brilliant by their professors and fellow classmates, and were recognized everywhere as the finest types our educational system has produced.

"If neither heredity nor environment plays a part in developing intelligence, then what we've been taught is false," said the first student.

"But what we've been taught is true because it's based on facts," said the second student.

"True," said the first student. "So what Hooper says must be false."

"If what Hooper says is false then he hasn't become the world's most brilliant baby by living on a diet of crib slats and turnips, and can't possibly be a Ph.D. at the age of two, delivering a lecture to an audience of college students from his baby buggy."

"That's true if what he says is false."

"And what he says is definitely false. We've already decided that."

"Right."

"Then Hooper isn't there. It's contrary to the rules of logic for him to be, to exist in the future, or to have ever been; hence, he just isn't," said the first student, with conviction.

No sooner had he uttered these words than Hooper disappeared. His body became opaque, then transparent. Then there was a puff of smoke, and he was gone, the fact of his existence wiped out by the logical thinking of the two students.

## II

Ten years later the two students whose logic had been responsible for Hooper's disappearance were sitting in a train on their way to Washington, D. C. Both were now eminent scientists whose contributions to humanity had fulfilled in every respect the great expectations of their university.

One had worked on the Manhattan Project devoting his time and energies to the development of the atom bomb. The other was the discoverer of a deadly new strain of bacteria with which it will be possible to wipe out the entire population of the earth in ten seconds flat.

Both had received the Congressional Medal of Honor seventeen times, all existing army awards, a 20 gun salute from the U. S. Navy, an honorary membership in the National Association of Manufacturers, over a dozen Presidential citations, and recognition everywhere as great humanitarians.

"You know what?" said the first humanitarian.

"No," said the second humanitarian. "What?"

"We made a mistake about young Hooper."

"How come?"

"He said he had become the world's most brilliant baby by living on a diet of crib slats and turnips."

"That's right."

"Diet is a part of environment."

"I see what you mean. What he said didn't conflict with what we were taught after all."

"So what he said was true."

"And if what he said was true, then he must still be alive."

"Right."

"That's logic."

"Hooper is alive then. It's contrary to the rules of logic for him not to be, not to have been, or not to be in the future; hence, he just is," said the two humanitarian scientists, with conviction.

No sooner had they uttered these words than Hooper materialized out of thin air. There was a huff and a puff, and a flash of lightning, and there he was, sitting in his baby buggy in the aisle of the train, as substantial as he ever had been.

"Gentlemen," he said, shaking his teething ring in their faces, "hereafter, don't leap to hasty conclusions."

But he knew they would.

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### *Report from the Editors*

We announced originally that our aim was to bring you quality stories, to try (like our sister magazines EQMM and True Crime Detective) to raise a field of popular entertainment to a higher and more enjoyable level of literacy. We're delighted to report that the eminent short-story critic, Martha Foley, seems to believe that we have succeeded. In her new volume, *THE BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES OF 1951*, Miss Foley lists *four* stories from Fantasy and Science Fiction (and none from other magazines in the field) among the "distinguished" stories of the year.

More specialized authorities agree with her too. The latest of the authoritative Bleiler-Dikty collections, *THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES — 1951*, chooses 4 out of its 17 stories (almost 25% of the contents!) from F&SF; and such leading science fiction anthologists as Groff Conklin, Ken Crossen, and August Derleth have each reprinted one or more of our stories. We find this especially gratifying because we've published only 10 previous issues, and much of the content of those issues has fallen outside the narrow limits of what is now arbitrarily defined as "science fiction."

We hope you'll find coming numbers of F&SF at least equal in quality to this past performance. A few of the features to appear in our next issue will be found on page 86.



*Possibly you know Margaret Irwin's The Curate and the Rake; if you don't, please look it up at once in Edward Wagenknecht's distinguished FIRESIDE BOOK OF GHOST STORIES (Bobbs-Merrill, 1947) and discover a subtly compelling treatment of the succubus theme second only to Oliver Onions' The Beckoning Fair One. And this is but one of several classic supernatural stories in Miss Irwin's MADAME FEARS THE DARK (London: Chatto & Windus, 1935), in which she combines a casually vivid evocation of historical periods with a deep perception of spiritual evil. We introduce Miss Irwin to this magazine with one of the less familiar items from that volume: the strange account of a haunted church, an adolescent tortured by too sensitive an awareness of the past, and a singular new kind of time-warp.*

## *The Earlier Service*

by MARGARET IRWIN

MRS. LACEY and her eldest daughter Alice hurried through the diminutive gate that led from the Rectory garden into the churchyard. Alice paused to call, "Jane, Father's gone on," under the window of her young sister's room. To her mother she added, "What a time she takes to dress!"

But Jane was sitting, ready, dressed for church, in the window-seat of her room. Close up to her window and a little to the right, stood the square church tower with gargoyles at each corner. She could see them every morning as she lay in her bed at the left of the window, their monstrous necks stretched out as though they were trying to get into her room.

The church bell stopped. Jane could hear the shuffle of feet as the congregation rose at the entrance of her father; then came silence, and then the drone of the General Confession. She jumped up, ran downstairs and into the churchyard. Right above her now hung the gargoyles, peering down at her. Behind them the sun was setting in clouds, soft and humid as winter sunsets can only be in Somerset. She was standing in front of a tiny door studded with nails. The doorway was the oldest part of the church of Cloud Martin. It dated back to Saxon days; and the shrivelled bits of blackened, leather-like stuff, still clinging to some of the nails, were said to be the skins of heathens flayed alive.

Jane paused a moment, her hands held outwards and a little behind her. Her face was paler than it had been in her room, her eyes were half shut, and her breath came a little quickly, but then she had been running. With the same sudden movement that she had jumped from the window-seat, she now jerked her hands forward, turned the great iron ring that served as a door-handle, and stole into the church.

The door opened into the corner just behind the Rectory pew. She was late. Mrs. Lacey and Alice were standing up and chanting the monotone that had become a habitual and almost an unconscious part of their lives. Jane stole in past her mother, and knelt for an instant, her red pig-tail, bright symbol of an old-fashioned upbringing, flopping sideways on to the dark wood. "Please God, don't let me be afraid — don't, don't, *don't* let me be afraid," she whispered; then stood, and repeated the responses in clear and precise tones, her eyes fixed on the long stone figure of the Crusader against the wall in front of her.

He was in chain armour; the mesh of mail surrounded his face like the coif of a nun, and a high crown-like helmet came low down on his brows. His feet rested against a small lion, which Jane as a child had always thought was his favourite dog that had followed him to the Holy Wars. His huge mailed hand grasped the pommel of his sword, drawn an inch or two from its scabbard. Jane gazed at him as though she would draw into herself all the watchful stern repose of the sleeping giant. Behind the words of the responses, other words repeated themselves in her mind.

"The knight is dust,  
His good sword rust,  
His soul is with the saints we trust."

"But he is *here*," she told herself; "you can't really be afraid with him here."

There came the sudden silence before the hymn, and she wondered what nonsense she had been talking to herself. She knew the words of the service too well, that was what it was; how could she ever attend to them?

They settled down for the sermon, a safe twenty minutes at least, in the Rector's remote and dreamlike voice. Jane's mind raced off at a tangent, almost painfully agile, yet confined always somewhere between the walls of the church.

"You shouldn't think of other things in church," was a maxim that had been often repeated to her. In spite of it she thought of more other things in those two Sunday services than in the whole week between.

"What a lot of Other Things other people must have thought of too in this church," she said to herself; the thought shifted and changed a little;

"there are lots of Other Things in this church; there are too many Other Things in this church." Oh, she *mustn't* say things like that to herself or she would begin to be afraid again — she was not afraid yet — of course, she was not afraid, there was nothing to be afraid of, and if there were, the Crusader was before her, his hand on his sword, ready to draw it at need. And what need could there be? Her mother was beside her whose profile she could see; *she* would never be disturbed, and by nothing.

But at that moment Mrs. Lacey shivered, and glanced behind her at the little door by which Jane had entered. Jane passed her fur to her, but Mrs. Lacey shook her head. Presently she looked round again, and kept her head turned for fully a minute. Jane watched her mother until the familiar home-trimmed hat turned again to the pulpit; she wondered then if her mother would indeed never be disturbed, and by nothing.

She looked up at the crooked angel in the tiny window of mediaeval glass. His red halo was askew; his oblique face had been a friend since her childhood. A little flat-nosed face in the carving round the pillar grinned back at her and all but winked.

"How old are you?" asked Jane.

"Six hundred years old," he replied.

"Then you should know better than to wink in church, let alone always grinning."

But he only sang to a ballad tune:

"Oh, if you'd seen as much as I,  
It's often you would wink."

"In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost ——"

Already! *Now* they would soon be outside again, out of the church for a whole safe week. But they would have to go through that door first.

She waited anxiously till her father went up to the altar to give the blessing. After she was confirmed, she, too, would have to go up to the altar. She would have to go. Now her father was going. He took so long to get there, he seemed so much smaller and darker as he turned his back on the congregation; it was really impossible sometimes to see that he had on a white surplice at all. What was he going to do up there at the altar, what was that gleaming pointed thing in his hand? *Who* was that little dark man going up to the altar? Her fingers closed tight on her prayer book as the figure turned round.

"You idiot, of course it's Father! There, you can see it's Father."

She stared at the benevolent nutcracker face, distinct enough now to her for all the obscurity of the chancel. How much taller he seemed now he had turned round. And of course, his surplice was white — quite white. What *had* she been seeing?

"May the peace of God which passeth all understanding ——"

She wished she could kneel under the spell of those words forever.

"Oh yes," said the little flat-nosed face as she rose from her knees, "but you'd find it dull, you know." He was grinning atrociously.

The two Rectory girls filed out after their mother, who carefully fastened the last button on her glove before she opened the door on which hung the skins of men that had been flayed alive. As she did so, she turned round and looked behind her, but went out without stopping. Jane almost ran after her, and caught her arm. Mrs. Lacey was already taking off her gloves.

"Were you looking round for Tom Elroy, Mother?" asked Alice.

"No, dear, not specially. I thought Tom or someone had come up to our door, but the church does echo so. I think there must be a draught from that door, but it's rather funny, I only feel it just at the end of the Evening Service."

"You oughtn't to sit at the end of the pew then, and with your rheumatism. Jane, you always seem to come in last. Why don't *you* sit at the end?"

"I won't!" snapped Jane.

"Whatever's the matter, Jane?" asked her mother.

"Why should I sit at the end of the pew? Why can't we move out of that pew altogether? I only wish we would."

Nobody paid any attention to this final piece of blasphemy, for they had reached the lighted hall of the Rectory by this time and were rapidly dispersing. Jane hung her coat and hat on the stand in the hall and went into the pantry to collect the cold meat and cheese. The maids were always out on Sunday evening. Alice was already making toast over the dining-room fire; she looked up as the Rector entered, and remarked severely: "You shouldn't quote Latin in your sermons, Father. Nobody in the church understands it."

"Nobody understands my sermons," said Mr. Lacey, "for nobody listens to them. So I may as well give myself the occasional pleasure of a Latin quotation, since only a dutiful daughter is likely to notice the lapse of manners. Alice, my dear, did I give out in church that next Friday is the last Confirmation class?"

"Friday!" cried Jane, in the doorway with the cheese. "Next Friday the last class? Then the Confirmation's next week."

"Of course it is, and high time, too," said Alice, "seeing that you were sixteen last summer. Only servant girls get confirmed *after* sixteen."

That settled it then. In a spirit of gloomy resignation Jane engulfed herself in an orange.

There were bright stars above the church tower when she went to bed.

She kept her head turned away as she drew the curtains, so that she should not see the gargoyles stretching their necks towards her window.

Friday evening found Jane at the last Confirmation class in the vestry with her father and three farmers' daughters, who talked in a curious mixture of broad Somerset and High School education and knew the catechism a great deal better than Jane.

After they had left, she followed closely at her father's elbow into the church to remove the hymn books and other vestiges of the choir practice that had taken place just before the class. The lamp he carried made a little patch of light wherever they moved; the outlying walls of darkness shifted, but pressed hard upon it from different quarters. The Rector was looking for his Plotinus, which he was certain he had put down somewhere in the church. He fumbled all over the Rectory pew while Jane tried on vain pretexts to drag him away.

"I have looked in that corner — thoroughly," she said.

The Rector sighed.

"What shall I say  
Since Truth is dead?"

he enquired. "So far from looking in that corner, Jane, you kept your head turned resolutely away from it."

"Did I? I suppose I was looking at the list of Rectors. What a long one it is, and all dead but you, Father."

He at once forgot Plotinus and left the Rectory pew to pore with proud pleasure over the names that began with one Johannes de Martigny and ended with his own.

"A remarkably persistent list. Only two real gaps — in the Civil Wars and in the fourteenth century. That was at the time of the Black Death, when there was no Rector of this parish for many years. You see, Jane? — 1349, and then there's no name till 1361 — Giraldus atte Welle. Do you remember when you were a little girl, very proud of knowing how to read, how you read through all the names to me, but refused to say that one? You said, 'It is a dreadful name,' and when I pressed you, you began to cry."

"How silly! There's nothing dreadful in Giraldus atte Welle," began Jane, but as she spoke she looked round her. She caught at the Rector's arm. "Father, there isn't anyone in the church besides us, is there?"

"My dear child, of course not. What's the matter? You're not nervous, are you?"

"No, not really. But we can find the Plotinus much easier by daylight. Oh — and Father — don't let's go out by the little door. Let's pretend

we're the General Congregation and go out very properly by the big door."

She pulled him down the aisle, talking all the way until they were both in his study. "Father doesn't *know*" — she said to herself — "he knows less than Mother. It's funny, when he would understand so much more."

But he understood that she was troubled. He asked, "Don't you want to get confirmed, Jane?" and then — "You mustn't be if you don't want it."

Jane grew frightened. There would be a great fuss if she backed out of it now after the very last class. Besides, there was the Crusader. Vague ideas of the initiation rites of knight and crusader crossed her mind in connection with the rite of Confirmation. He had spent a night's vigil in a church, perhaps in this very church. One could never fear anything else after that. If only she didn't have to go right up to the altar at the Communion Service. But she would not think of that; she told the Rector that it was quite all right really, and at this moment they reached the hall door and met Mrs. Lacey hurrying towards them with a letter from Hugh, now at Oxford, who was coming home for the vacation on Wednesday.

"He asks if he may bring an undergraduate friend for the first few days — a Mr. York who is interested in old churches and Hugh thinks he would like to see ours. He must be clever — it is such a pity Elizabeth is away — she is the only one who could talk to him; of course, he will enjoy talking with you, Father dear, but men seem to expect girls too to be clever now. And just as Janey's Confirmation is coming on — she isn't taking it seriously enough as it is."

"Mother! Don't you want us to play dumb crambo like the last time Hugh brought friends down?"

"Nonsense," said the Rector hastily. "Dumb crambo requires so much attention that it should promote seriousness in all things. I am very glad the young man is coming, my love, and I will try my hardest to talk as cleverly as Elizabeth."

He went upstairs with his wife, and said in a low voice: "I think Jane is worrying rather too much about her Confirmation as it is. She seems quite jumpy sometimes."

"Oh — *jumpy* — yes," said Mrs. Lacey, as though she refused to consider jumpiness the right qualification for Confirmation. The question of the curtains in the spare room however proved more immediately absorbing.

Hugh, who preferred people to talk shop, introduced his friend's hobby the first evening at dinner. "He goes grubbing over churches with a pencil and a bit of paper and finds things scratched on the walls and takes rubbings of them and you call them *graffiti*. Now, then, Father, any offers from our particular property?"

The Rector did not know of any specimens in his church. He asked what sort of things were scratched on the walls.

"Oh, anything," said York, "texts, scraps of dog Latin, aphorisms — once I found the beginning of a love song. When a monk, or anyone who was doing a job in the church, got bored, he'd begin to scratch words on the wall just as one does on a seat or log or anything today. Only we nearly always write our names and they hardly ever did."

He showed some of the rubbings he had taken. Often, he explained, you couldn't see anything but a few vague scratches, and then in the rubbing they came out much clearer. "The bottom of a pillar is a good place to look," he said, "and corners — anywhere where they're not likely to be too plainly seen."

"There are some marks on the wall near our pew," said Jane. "Low down, nearly on the ground."

He looked at her, pleased, and distinguishing her consciously for the first time from her rather sharp-voiced sister. He saw a gawky girl whose grave, beautiful eyes were marred by deep hollows under them, as though she did not sleep enough. And Jane looked back with satisfaction at a pleasantly ugly, wide, good-humoured face.

She showed him the marks next morning, both squatting on their heels beside the wall. Hugh had strolled in with them, declaring that they were certain to find nothing better than names of the present choir boys, and had retired to the organ loft for an improvisation. York spread a piece of paper over the marks and rubbed his pencil all over it and asked polite questions about the church. Was it as haunted as it should be?

Jane, concerned for the honour of their church, replied that the villagers had sometimes seen lights in the windows at midnight; but York contemptuously dismissed that. "You'd hear as much of any old church." He pulled out an electric torch and switched it on to the wall.

"It's been cut in much more deeply at the top," he remarked; "I can read it even on the wall." He spelt out slowly, "Nemo potest duobus dominis." That's a text from the Vulgate. It means, 'No man can serve two masters.'

"And did the same man write the rest underneath, too?"

"No, I should think that was written much later, about the end of the fourteenth century. Hartley will tell me exactly. He's a friend of mine in the British Museum, and I send him the rubbings and he finds out all about them."

He examined the sentence on the paper by his torch, while Hugh's "improvisation" sent horrible cacophonies reeling through the church.

"Latin again, and jolly bad — monkish Latin, you know. Can't make out that word. Oh!"

"Well?"

"It's an answer to the text above, I think. I say, this is the best find I've ever had. Look here, the first fellow wrote, 'No man can serve two masters,' and then, about a century after, number two squats down and writes — well, as far as I can make it out, it's like this, 'Show service therefore to the good, but cleave unto the evil.' Remarkable sentiment for a priest to leave in his church, for I'd imagine only the priest would be educated enough to write it. Now why did he say that, I wonder?"

"Because evil is more interesting than good," murmured Jane.

"Hmph. You agree with him then? What kind of evil?"

"I don't know. It's just — don't you know how words and sentences stick in your head sometimes? It's as though I were always hearing it."

"Do you think you'll hear it to-morrow?" asked York maliciously. He had been told that to-morrow was the day of her Confirmation. She tried to jump up, but as she was cramped from squatting so long on her heels she only sat down instead, and they both burst out laughing.

"I'm sorry," said York, "I didn't mean to be offensive. But I'd like to know what's bothering you."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, you know. But never mind. I dare say you can't say."

This at once caused an unusual flow of speech from Jane.

"Why should evil be interesting?" she gasped. "It isn't in real life — when the servants steal the spoons and the villagers quarrel with their neighbours. Mrs. Elroy came round to Father in a fearful stew the other day because old Mrs. Croft had made a maukin of her."

"A what?"

"An image — you know — out of clay, and she was sticking pins in it, and Mrs. Elroy declared she knew every time a pin had gone in because she felt a stab right through her body."

"What did your father say?"

"He said it was sciatica, but she wouldn't believe it, and he had to go round to Mrs. Croft and talk about Christmas peace and goodwill, but she only leered and yammered at him in the awful way she does, and then Alice said that Christmas blessings only come to those who live at peace with their neighbours, and Mrs. Croft knew that blessings meant puddings, so she took the pins out and let the maukin be, and Mrs. Elroy hasn't felt any more stabs."

"Mrs. Croft is a proper witch then?"

York stood up, looking rather curiously at her shining eyes.

"Cloud Martin has always been a terribly bad parish for witches," said Jane proudly.



"You find *that* form of evil interesting," he said.

Jane was puzzled and abashed by his tone. She peered at the wall again and thought she could make out another mark underneath the others. York quickly took a rubbing and, examining the paper, found it to be one word only, and probably of the same date as the last sentence, which had caused so much discussion about evil.

"'Ma-ma,' ah, I have it. 'Maneo' — 'I remain,' that's all."

"'I remain?' Who remains?"

"Why, the same 'I' who advises us to cleave to evil. Remembering, perhaps, though it hadn't been said then, that the evil that men do lives after them."

She looked at him with startled eyes. He thought she was a nice child but took things too seriously.

Hugh's attempts at jazz on the organ had faded away. As Jane and York left the church by the little door, they met him coming out through the vestry.

"Lots of luck," said York, handing him the paper. "Did you turn on the verges or anyone to look as well?"

"No — why? Aren't the family enough for you?"

"Rather. I was only wondering what that little man was doing by the door as we went out. You must have seen him, too," he said, turning to Jane; "he was quite close to us."

But as she stared at him, he wished he had not spoken.

"Must have been the organist," said Hugh, who was looking back at the church tower. "Do you like gargoyles, York? There's rather a pretty one up there of a devil eating a child — see it?"

On the Sunday morning after the Confirmation, the day of her first Communion, Jane rose early, dressed by candlelight, met her mother and sister in the hall, and followed them through the raw, uncertain darkness of the garden and churchyard. The chancel windows were lighted up; the gargoyles on the church tower could just be seen, their distorted shapes a deeper black against the dark sky.

Jane slipped past her mother at the end of the pew. Except for the lights in the chancel, and the one small lamp that hung over the middle aisle, the church was dark, and one could not see who was there. Mr. Lacey was already in the chancel, and the Service began. Jane had been to this Service before, but never when the morning was dark like this. Perhaps that was what made it so different. For it *was* different.

Her father was doing such odd things up there at the altar. Why was he pacing backwards and forwards so often, and waving his hands in that funny

way? And what *was* he saying? She couldn't make out the words — she must have completely lost the place. She tried to find it in her prayer book, but the words to which she was listening gave her no clue; she could not recognise them at all, and presently she realised that not only were the words unknown to her, but so was the language in which they were spoken. Alice's rebuke came back to her: "You shouldn't quote Latin in your sermons, Father." But this wasn't a sermon, it was the Communion Service. Only in the Roman Catholic Church would they have the Communion Service in Latin, and then it would be the Mass. Was Father holding Mass? He would be turned out of the Church for being Roman. It was bewildering, it was dreadful. But her mother didn't seem to notice anything.

Did she notice that there were other people up there at the altar?

There was a brief pause. People came out of the darkness behind her, and went up to the chancel. Mrs. Lacey slipped out of the pew and joined them. Jane sat back and let her sister go past her.

"You are coming, Janey?" whispered Alice as she passed.

Jane nodded, but she sat still. She had let her mother and sister leave her; she stared at the two rows of dark figures standing in the chancel behind the row of those who knelt; she could not see her mother and sister among them; she could see no one whom she knew.

She dared not look again at the figures by the altar; she kept her head bowed. The last time she had looked there had been two others standing by her father — that is, if that little dark figure had indeed been her father. If she looked now, would she see him there? Her head bent lower and sank into her hands. Instead of the one low voice murmuring the words of the Sacrament, a muffled chant of many voices came from the chancel.

She heard the scuffle of feet, but no steps came past her down into the church again. What were they doing up there? At last she had to look, and she saw that the two rows were standing facing each other across the chancel, instead of each behind the other. She tried to distinguish their faces, to recognise even one that she knew. Presently she became aware that why she could not do this was because they had no faces. The figures all wore dark cloaks with hoods, and there were blank white spaces under the hoods.

"It is possible," she said to herself, "that those are masks." She formed the words in her mind deliberately and with precision as though to distract her attention; for she felt in danger of screaming aloud with terror, and whatever happened she must not draw down on her the attention of those waiting figures. She knew now that they were waiting for her to go up to the altar.

She might slip out by the little door and escape, if only she dared to move. She stood up and saw the Crusader lying before her, armed, on guard, his sword half drawn from its scabbard. Her breath was choking her. "Crusader,

Crusader, rise and help me," she prayed very fast in her mind. But the Crusader stayed motionless. She must go out by herself. With a blind, rushing movement, she threw herself on to the little door, dragged it open, and got outside.

Mrs. Lacey and Alice thought that Jane, wishing for solitude, must have returned from the Communion table to some other pew. Only Mr. Lacey knew that she had not come up to the Communion table at all; and it troubled him still more when she did not appear at breakfast. Alice thought she had gone for a walk; Mrs. Lacey said in her vague, late Victorian way that she thought it only natural Jane should wish to be alone for a little.

"I should say it was decidedly more natural that she should wish for sausages and coffee after being up for an hour on a raw December morning," said her husband with unusual asperity.

It was York who found her half an hour later walking very fast through the fields. He took her hands, which felt frozen, and as he looked into her face he said, "Look here, you know, this won't do. What are you so frightened of?" And then broke off his questions, told her not to bother to try and speak but to come back to breakfast, and half-pulled her with him through the thick, slimy mud, back to the Rectory. Suddenly she began to tell him that the Early Service that morning had all been different — the people, their clothes, even the language, it was all quite different.

He thought over what she stammered out, and wondered if she could somehow have had the power to go back in time and see and hear the Latin Mass as it used to be in that church.

"The old Latin Mass wasn't a horrible thing, was it?"

"Jane! Your father's daughter needn't ask that."

"No. I see. Then it wasn't the Mass I saw this morning — it was —" She spoke very low so that he could hardly catch the words. "There was something horrible going on up there by the altar — and they were waiting — waiting for me."

Her hand trembled under his arm. He thrust it down into his pocket on the pretext of warming it. It seemed to him monstrous that this nice, straightforward, little schoolgirl, whom he liked best of the family, should be hag-ridden like this.

That evening he wrote a long letter to his antiquarian friend, Hartley, enclosing the pencil rubbings he had taken of the words scratched on the wall by the Rectory pew.

On Monday he was leaving them, to go and look at other churches in Somerset. He looked hard at Jane as he said "good-bye." She seemed to have completely forgotten whatever it was that had so distressed her the

day before, and at breakfast had been the jolliest of the party. But when she felt York's eyes upon her, the laughter died out of hers; she said, but not as though she had intended to say it, "You will come back for Wednesday."

"Why, what happens on Wednesday?"

"It is full moon then."

"That's not this Wednesday then, it must be Wednesday week. Why do you want me to come back then?"

She could give no answer to that. She turned self-conscious and began an out-of-date jazz song about "Wednesday week way down in old Bengal!"

It was plain she did not know why she had said it. But he promised himself that he would come back by then, and asked Mrs. Lacey if he might look them up again on his way home.

In the intervening ten days he was able to piece together some surprising information from Hartley which seemed to throw a light on the inscriptions he had made at Cloud Martin.

In the reports of certain trials for sorcery in the year 1474, one Giraldus atte Welle, priest of the parish of Cloud Martin in Somerset, confessed under torture to having held the Black Mass in his church at midnight on the very altar where he administered the Blessed Sacrament on Sundays. This was generally done on Wednesday or Thursday, the chief days of the Witches' Sabbath when they happened to fall on the night of the full moon. The priest would then enter the church by the little side door, and from the darkness in the body of the church those villagers who had followed his example and sworn themselves to Satan, would come up and join him, one by one, hooded and masked, that none might recognise the other. He was charged with having secretly decoyed young children in order to kill them on the altar as a sacrifice to Satan, and he was finally charged with attempting to murder a young virgin for that purpose.

All the accused made free confessions towards the end of their trial, especially in as far as they implicated other people. All however were agreed on a certain strange incident. That just as the priest was about to cut the throat of the girl on the altar, the tomb of the Crusader opened, and the knight who had lain there for two centuries arose and came upon them with drawn sword, so that they scattered and fled through the church, leaving the girl unharmed on the altar.

With these reports from Hartley in his pocket, York travelled back on the Wednesday week by slow cross-country trains that managed to miss their connections and land him at Little Borridge, the station for Cloud Martin, at a quarter past ten. The village cab had broken down, there was no other car to be had at that hour, it was a six-mile walk up to the Rectory, there was a station hotel where it would be far more reasonable to spend the

night, and finish his journey next morning. Yet York refused to consider this alternative; all through the maddening and uncertain journey, he had kept saying to himself, "I shall be late," though he did not know for what. He had promised Jane he would be back this Wednesday, and back he must be. He left his luggage at the station and walked up. It was the night of the full moon, but the sky was so covered with cloud as to be almost dark. Once or twice he missed his way in following the elaborate instructions of the station-master, and had to retrace his steps a little. It was hard on twelve o'clock when at last he saw the square tower of Cloud Martin Church, a solid blackness against the flying clouds.

He walked up to the little gate into the churchyard. There was a faint light from the chancel windows, and he thought he heard voices chanting. He paused to listen, and then he was certain of it, for he could hear the silence when they stopped. It might have been a minute or five minutes later that he heard the most terrible shriek he had ever imagined, though faint, coming as it did from the closed church; and knew it for Jane's voice. He ran up to the little door and heard that scream again and again. As he broke through the door he heard it cry, "Crusader! Crusader!" The church was in utter darkness, there was no light in the chancel, he had to fumble in his pockets for his electric torch. The screams had stopped and the whole place was silent. He flashed his torch right and left, and saw a figure lying huddled against the altar. He knew that it was Jane; in an instant he had reached her. Her eyes were open, looking at him, but they did not know him, and she did not seem to understand him when he spoke. In a strange, rough accent of broad Somerset that he could scarcely distinguish, she said, "It was my body on the altar."



Alexander de Campo Fregoso, Bishop of Ventimilium, professed to me, saith Carpus (upon the faith of a Bishop), that at Lamai, a woman of the noble family of the Buccanigens brought forth sixteen children at a birth, of the bigness of a man's palm, all of which had motion; and that besides these sixteen, which had human likeness, she brought forth at the same time a creature, in the likeness of a horse, which had also motion.

— Nathaniel Wanley, *The Wonders of the Little World* 1678.

*In his radio programs Murder by Experts and The Mysterious Traveler (for which he recently received his second "Edgar" award from Mystery Writers of America), Robert Arthur is compelled to restrict himself to grim and grisly writing — which is, we think, a most deplorable state of affairs. Competent merchants of grimness are not uncommon; but the Arthur gift for plausible absurdity is a rare and enviable one, as you already know from such stories as Postpaid to Paradise. Here we offer another revival of a delightful Arthur fantasia from Argosy, this time with a wacky science fiction slant — and a plea to radio producers to turn him loose on creating such humorous improbabilia for the millions who now know him only as a murdermonger.*

## *The Universe Broke Down*

by ROBERT ARTHUR

I WISH I knew exactly how to describe Jeremiah Jupiter. The truth is, I don't know whether he's the world's most brilliant scientific mind or whether he's cracked worse than the Liberty Bell.

I once read a story about a baseball pitcher who could throw the most eccentric curves, because he was a refugee from a strait jacket and that was the way his mind worked — in eccentric curves. Sometimes I think that's the case with Jeremiah Jupiter. That he doesn't think so much as let his mind jump around inside his skull like a Mexican jumping bean on a hot griddle.

But there's no use trying to analyze Jupiter for you. He's a wealthy amateur dabbler in advanced science, with money enough to buy a ton of radium, and therefore no interest whatever in making more money. He's given to enthusiasms in which he'll work years if necessary to develop an idea, but the enthusiasms sometimes go just as fast as they come. He may spend a year developing a gadget, and then lose interest in it just as it's on the point of perfection.

Since I've known him he's made some of the most outstanding scientific developments, but I have acquired a certain allergy to Jeremiah Jupiter and his discoveries. They have a bad habit of going wrong, somehow; and nine times out of ten, I'm the one they go wrong on.

Consequently, when he called me up one morning last June and said he

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wanted me to go up to Bear Mountain with him to try out his newest scientific miracle, I said no, loudly and firmly. Then I groaned, got up — it was Sunday morning and I'd planned to sleep late — and got dressed. Twenty minutes later Jeremiah Jupiter was outside my apartment house in his big V-16 sedan, honking.

Swallowing my still-hot coffee and burning myself in the process, I put on my new twenty-dollar Panama and went down. I fancied that I looked pretty dressy, in a beige linen suit, cerulean blue tie, and new hat. But Jupiter took no notice of my appearance.

He himself, behind the wheel of the V-16, looked as usual: as if he'd stolen the clothes off a scarecrow and slept in them. But his cheeks were pink and his blue eyes bright behind the powerful horn-rims he was forced to wear, and his blond hair lay back on his skull with a neat wave to it. Being small and inclined to plumpness — eating was his only non-scientific passion — he looked more like a cherub than like a scientific menace.

"Lucius!" he said happily, as if he were doing me a tremendous favor. "Jump in! I can't wait!"

As if echoing him, a cat made a fierce spitting noise in the back of the car, and a dog growled with savage fury. That provoked a rat-like squeaking, and I glanced uneasily into the rear seat to see what Jeremiah Jupiter had back there.

I saw a *mélange* of objects that only Jupiter could have found a collective use for. The spitting came from a tremendous, tawny alley cat with one ear in rags and an eye gouged out in some back-fence battle, penned up in a box. The growling came from a Great Dane trying to get out of a slatted crate to reach the cat. The squeaking issued from a cage of six large white rats.

On the seat lay an Indian tomahawk, a tournament bow and quiver of arrows, an elephant gun, a driver and six golf balls, and a basket that looked as if it contained lunch.

"Jumping jellyfish!" I exclaimed, as Jupiter let in the clutch and we went from a dead stop to thirty miles an hour. "What" — I had to hold onto my new Panama, for he had the top down — "what in seven kinds of thunder are you going to do with those things? Are you going to massacre a rival, play archery, golf, or apply for admission at Mattewan?"

"Lucius," Jeremiah Jupiter told me in the tone of bubbling excitement that always preceded his first tryout of a new gadget — on me, usually — "that gun is going to fire the shot heard 'round the universe."

"Around the world, you mean," I told him. "That's how the quotation goes."

"*This* gun," Jupiter insisted, "is going to fire the shot heard 'round the

universe. The other things I grabbed up because they were handy, in the lab and the game room."

After that he was busy driving, for even with the new four-lane highways the roads toward Bear Mountain were crowded, and I couldn't talk because I was constantly out of breath gasping at the near misses. Jupiter wouldn't buy one of the new Hummingbird planes that flew backwards, sideways, forwards or straight up; he said they were too dangerous!

Finally I just shut my eyes, to give my nerves a chance to unjangle, and didn't open them again until Jupiter said cheerfully, "Well, Lucius, here we are!"

Then I found we'd turned up a side road. We were now parked at the end of a rough trail fifty feet below the crest of one of Bear Mountain's companion peaks. It was a wild section, and we were completely alone.

"Now," Jupiter told me brightly, hopping out and dragging crates, cages and suitcases out of the rear, "all we have to do is to take these things to the top and we're ready."

I protested, but as usual it did no good. Presently I found myself staggering up a crude trail, loaded down like a pack mule, while Jupiter trotted ahead conveying two suitcases.

Letting me bring up everything else — including the wolfish Great Dane, which I let out of the crate and dragged up on the end of a leash — he set himself to making ready some apparatus from the suitcases.

Presently I had everything — dog, cat, rats, gun, bow, arrows, golf club, a tomahawk, and lunch — assembled on the flat space, about a hundred feet square, that was the top of the peak. Then I bitterly asked Jupiter if he wanted me to go back to bring up the car too, but he shook his head, unaware of the sarcasm.

"We won't need it, Lucius," he said vaguely, "although it's good of you to offer. Now let's see . . . yes, everything's ready, and the exercise has given me quite an appetite. I believe we'll lunch before we do any experimenting."

The exercise had given *him* an appetite! I laughed harshly, but he was still oblivious to my efforts to insult him, and I had to give up and start eating if I wanted any of the lunch.

For Jeremiah Jupiter was very fond of food, and his Javanese boy put up a lunch that the Waldorf-Plaza would have kept under glass on exhibit as something special. And after engulfing some terrapin, a couple of squabs, and a few other tidbits from the vacuum-heater lunch hamper, I felt in a more kindly mood.

We tossed the scraps to the cat and dog, which I had tied to pines some distance apart, and they downed them greedily, then returned to their spitting and snarling. The rats in the cage at our feet crouched fearfully.



"Now, Lucius," Jeremiah Jupiter announced, "I'll tell you what we're here for. You are going to witness the first outdoor demonstration of the short-circuiting of space!"

I blinked at him. Taking for granted that I wasn't going to understand, he was already explaining.

"I mean," he said largely, making a grandiloquent gesture toward the horizon, "I propose to show you that I can eliminate space between two points by by-passing it. By detouring around it! So that if you wished to move from this peak to that one over there" — he pointed at another, slightly lower summit, a quarter of a mile away — "you could take but a step — and be there. Do I make myself clear?"

"I understand what you mean," I told him, "but I don't believe it's possible. And in any case, *I'm not going to try it!*"

"Hanh!" Jupiter snorted. "You don't believe it's possible, eh? Just for that, ten years from now when you want to go any place *via* the Jeremiah Jupiter Space-pass Transit Company, you'll have to pay your way. And I was going to give you a lifetime Annie Oakley, too.

"It'll be the biggest thing the world has ever seen — wipe out railroads, automobiles, shipping, airplanes, and rockets. We'll have an office, with hundreds of booths. You'll step into one marked *Paris*, for example — and there you are, on the Rue de la Paix! Or into the Waikiki entrance — and come out on the beach, ready for a plunge."

He sobered thoughtfully.

"That is," he qualified, "if we can discover more meteor-magna."

"Making no mention of the horrible economic panic, with millions starving to death due to the collapse of two or three of the world's leading industries if all this comes about," I told him sardonically — "just what is meteor-magna?"

"This." From one of the open suitcases Jupiter took a chunk of spongy stuff, gray and porous. "It was found in that meteor that plunged into Mexico last year. The Government sold it to my agents; you know they have instructions to buy for me at any price any new scientific find, whatever its nature.

"It's the heart and soul of my apparatus for short-circuiting the spatial dimension: for — to make a crude analogy in an effort to get the whole thing clear inside your unscientific mind — drilling a hole sideways through space.

"I'll give you an example. Suppose two ants are on a sheet of paper — a two-dimensional world. Suppose they're on opposite sides of the paper, and want to join each other. One of them will have to crawl clear across the sheet, over the edge, and clear back on the other side. That's equivalent to

traveling distance, or through space, in our three-dimensional world. "But suppose one of the ants invents an apparatus for drilling a hole in the paper, through which it can crawl in an instant to join the other. That would be equivalent to my Spatial By-pass apparatus, which utilizes a pseudo-fourth dimension of its own creation to make it possible to move from one spot to another without traversing the intervening distance. Now I trust everything is clear?"

"As clear as it ever will be," I growled. "Let's see you make good."

He had already set the suitcases in the center of the open space. One was open, showing a control panel. A wire ran from the panel to a small black box like a battery, and another cable ran to a cone-shaped directional antenna about the size and shape of an old-fashioned electric heater.

Now Jupiter took a handful of meteor-magna from the second suitcase, put it into a metal cylinder at the base of the control panel, and straightened.

"All ready," he pronounced, with customary self-confidence. "This battery is really a cosmic ray trap. It catches and amplifies cosmic rays, feeds them into the magna-chamber, where the magna disintegrates to give what I'm going to call the Jupiter Fourth-dimensional effect.

"The antenna there is gyroscopically stabilized to hold steady on its focus. You could tip it over, and it would still radiate in the right direction. So no danger of accidents. I'm not taking any chances this time, Lucius."

He beamed at me, and turned a knob, then clicked a switch. The directional antenna began to glow with a cold violet light. Nothing else occurred.

"Well?" I asked. "Now what?"

"Now, my dear Lucius, you shall fire the shot heard 'round infinity," Jupiter crowed. "You pride yourself upon being an expert shot. There's the gun. Can you see that white, dead limb upon that tree over there?"

He pointed to a dead oak atop the adjacent summit, perhaps five hundred yards away.

"I dare say you can hit it without trouble? You're an experienced marksman. You know the time that should elapse between the shot and the bullet's striking the target. On this occasion, I venture, you will see the branch shatter almost before you've pulled the trigger, as the bullet by-passes the intervening distance through my spatial short circuit."

The branch was large, and the gun had telescopic sights. The shot was child's play. I swung the gun to my shoulder and fired. The line of the shot was directly over the glowing antenna.

Nothing happened.

My lips tight, for I was a bit vain of my ability as a rifleman, I took more careful aim, centered the old limb exactly, and fired.

Still nothing happened.

"Lucius!" Jupiter exclaimed angrily, "you're missing on purpose. Here, give me the gun."

He took it from me and fired. Still nothing occurred. Rapidly he emptied all five remaining cartridges, without once hitting the oak or anything else.

A trifle downcast, Jupiter gave me back the gun.

"Something must be wrong with the sights," he muttered. "However, we've plenty of other tests. Suppose we try the golf balls next. You're an ardent sportsman — if you devoted as much time to work as you do to playing with guns, clubs, balls, and rackets, you'd be a very rich man. Have you ever driven a golf ball five hundred yards? A handy achievement, if you could do it in a match, eh? Well, tee up those balls and see how it feels."

Sceptically, I teed the balls on small sand mounds, six inches apart, and took a stance, wagging the driver.

"Now," Jeremiah Jupiter directed, "hit one for all you're worth."

I obeyed, there was a satisfying click, and the ball zinged off the clubhead like a rocket. For about forty feet I could follow its flight and then — directly beyond the glowing antenna — it vanished.

"Now watch!" Jupiter crowed. "It'll be bouncing off that mountain in a sec —"

His mouth closed on the unfinished word. The ball didn't bounce off anything. It never reappeared. Beginning to look a trifle distracted, Jupiter told me to drive the rest. I did. Each of the five acted as the first had — vanished and did not reappear.

Jupiter's lips were a tight line.

"Hmmm!" he mumbled to himself. "Wonder if I could have the power turned too high? Maybe those golf balls are coming down in San Francisco, or bouncing off a Tibetan Lama about now. Let's see now . . ."

He fiddled with the dials on the panel, then rejoined me.

"Hand me that tomahawk," he directed. "It's large, and easy to see. This time we'll *watch*. . ."

We watched. And saw — nothing. The tomahawk, an authentic Apache war weapon, sailed through the air, heading for the edge of the cliff, and was gone from sight as abruptly as a turned-out light.

Jupiter shook his head and readjusted the dials. Then he took up the bow and arrow.

"Please watch carefully, Lucius," he instructed, rather more than a little snappishly. "I'm going to aim for that tree. I've shortened the Spatial Bypass to the utmost. It *must* cease short of that summit."

He drew the bow, sighted, released the bowstring. It twanged. The arrow sped away; straight, graceful, a long silver shaft shimmering in the sun. It went into that space of nothingness — and did not come out again.

One by one Jupiter shot off the whole dozen arrows. But the result remained unaltered, and, after having launched them all out of the here into the nowhere, he mopped his brow.

"I shot an arrow into the air," I quoted with sardonic emphasis. "It fell to earth, I knew not where." I hope you aren't scaring any Turks out of their tarbooshes, Jupiter, or pinking any unhappy pigs on a Swiss mountainside."

"This is no joking matter," Jeremiah Jupiter murmured weakly. "I'm — I'm not sure, Lucius, that those arrows, bullets, golf balls or tomahawk even stopped on earth. They — they may be scaring some poor inhabitant of Titan to death this instant — Saturn is in that direction. Or even an unfortunate inhabitant of the Rigel system. Though, of course, with all space ahead of them, they're not *likely* to hit anyone. Still —

"But I have one more idea. Let me have the rats."

I handed him the white rats. He moved up very close to the glowing antenna, and opened the cage.

"I'm going to let one crawl into the By-pass," he muttered to me. "Maybe, if it isn't traveling fast . . ."

But he was doomed to disappointment. About those rats going any place slowly, that is. As he reached in to take it out, it nipped his fingers — excited and nervous, no doubt, because of the proximity of the cat and dog.

Jupiter yelled and dropped the cage. The rats came tumbling out at his feet; and the frantic alley cat pulled free from the tree I'd tied her to and shot like a comet across the rock after the rats.

That was too much for the Great Dane. With a yowl it gave one tremendous lunge and broke its leash. It took out after the cat. And the rats left for parts unknown. Definitely unknown.

Squeaking, they scuttled forward. Sounding a jungle hunting cry, the alley cat streaked after them. Growling, the dog went after the cat. A rapidly moving procession of hunters and hunted, they all passed between Jeremiah Jupiter's legs, upending him to the rock and — rats leading, cat coming up in the stretch, dog making a bid at the final pole — charged straight into the By-pass. And were gone.

After some seconds, Jupiter got to his feet. Both of us stared at the spot where the creatures had whisked off into nothingness.

"I wonder if the cat will catch the rats — or the dog catch the cat — wherever they are now?" Jupiter murmured.

"They — Hey!" I yelled in wild alarm, interrupting myself as a hornet-like object buzzed past my ear. "Somebody's shooting at us!"

"Nonsense!" Jeremiah Jupiter told me. "This is New York State. Nobody shoots at strangers. Oof!"

He dropped flat on his face as something hummed past his nose. I joined him when a third bullet zipped past my ear. Lying there, we heard five more shots go overhead.

"There — there ought to be a law against that," Jupiter said, shaken. "But I didn't hear any shots."

Neither had I. Though I hadn't thought about it. I was about to say something — I've forgotten what — when something much larger, with a whitish sheen, whisked by as I was about to sit up.

It was followed by five more, and I knew what they were. Golf balls!

"Oh, my goodness!" Jupiter was murmuring, pressing himself flat against the rock. "Oh, my goodness. *Look out! There it comes!*"

It was a large Indian tomahawk that went by overhead, turning end over end, and followed the golf balls into nothingness in the By-pass.

Then in swift succession twelve arrows slished past, cutting the wind with a thin, keening noise that chilled our blood. I miscounted, and when eleven had gone by, started to sit up. Something plucked at my brand new twenty-dollar Panama; I saw it whisking away with an arrow through it, and before I could even start to reach for it, it was gone.

"Quick, now!" Jupiter gasped. "Over here. By the trees. Out of the line."

I scrambled after him, and didn't venture to sit up until we reached the trees. My hat was gone, my new linen suit ripped, and I was pretty sore. But I didn't have time to upbraid him.

For as I sat up, directly in front of us six white rats burst out of nowhere and scampered desperately across the rock, followed by a cat whose legs blurred with speed as she tried to catch them, and a giant dog lunging after the cat's tail, not three feet from his nose. Zip — zip — zip — they hurtled across the rock and into the By-pass and were gone again.

But not before the racing dog had brushed against the suitcase that held Jeremiah Jupiter's supply of meteor-magna. It toppled over and began to slide down a slope.

"No!" Jupiter cried out in horror. "My meteor-magna!"

He leaped up and dashed for the suitcase. He almost got it, but not quite. His efforts ended only by giving it a shove that sped it down into the area of the By-pass, and so from sight. And Jupiter, overbalanced by his lunge, followed it.

I was too late to do anything. One instant there he was, frantically trying to keep his feet, his arms waving, his legs working, his mouth opening and closing; and then — there he wasn't.

I was alone, with the remaining suitcase and the glowing antenna.

It was lucky for Jeremiah Jupiter that I do take sports seriously. Among

other accomplishments, I can rope. I hurried down to the car, got out the tow-rope, and ran back up, making a loop of sorts in it.

Then I waited. In fifteen minutes — I timed it — the procession came by again. Bullets snarled, golf balls whizzed, tomahawk hummed, arrows keened past and off again. Then came the six white rats, still holding their distance, with the cat trying to close the gap and the dog trying to snaffle the cat. Zing-zing-zing; and once more they were gone.

Then the suitcase came sliding over the rocks, struck a snag, bounced aside, went over the cliff, and fell hundreds of feet into the Hudson River. I couldn't do anything to stop it. I was waiting for Jupiter.

Last of all he popped abruptly out of invisibility, staggering forward still, arms and legs still working, mouth still open, seeming not to have moved a muscle since he had vanished a quarter of an hour before.

I swung the noose. It fell over his shoulders, and I snubbed against a pine. Jupiter brought up with a jerk and flopped to the rock, dazed, knocking over his apparatus. It slid a few feet and fell into a deep crevice near the edge of the cliff, dragging the small antenna after it. But the gyroscope base kept the antenna pointing as it had been, and I could see it still glowing, a dozen feet down, indicating the By-pass was still there.

I couldn't reach it, however, and anyway, I had enough to do to revive Jupiter and get the wind back into him.

"How long was I gone?" he gasped. I told him, and he looked reflective.

"To me," he stated, "it was no time at all. It was instantaneous. No more than the wink of an eye. And to think" — for a moment he was deeply thoughtful — "to think that I made a complete circuit of the universe in a quarter of an hour. Infinity and back in fifteen minutes!"

He drew in a deep breath.

"Because that's what happened, Lucius," he told me. "I've just figured it out. I *thought* I hitched that wire to the wrong connection last night. But something distracted me, and I forgot to change it. So today I got a short circuit. Instead of a controlled By-pass, I was getting full power, and as nearly a total By-pass as the apparatus was capable of. Lucius, do you realize that I came within thirty feet of by-passing all of infinity?"

"Yes, Lucius," he said, as the bullets began cracking past us for the third time. "Those objects are circling the entire universe every fifteen minutes. Naturally, since space is curved, they return to their starting point, whisk through the gap of thirty feet of real space unaffected by my pseudo fourth dimension, and are off again into infinity."

The dog, cat, and rats scuttled past now, still holding their positions.

"As their total spatial travel is only thirty feet each circuit," Jeremiah Jupiter observed, "they may continue their universal circumnavigation for

quite some time. Let's work it out. Say the cat and dog will run for three or four miles. Thirty feet into about twenty-one thousand goes seven hundred times. They should, then, pass by about seven hundred times before exhaustion stops them — unless, of course, the dog catches the cat, or the cat catches the rats, before then.

"The arrows, golf balls and tomahawk will cease much sooner. But the high-power rifle bullets will continue going by as long as or longer than the cat and dog. For a week at least, I should say."

As he finished speaking, the whole assemblage began its fourth trip — or should I say fourth lap? — past us. I was forced to admit that what he said sounded reasonable. After all, space *is* curved. And all the science I ever learned held that you would return to your starting point if you kept going long enough. Jeremiah Jupiter had just succeeded in reducing the round-trip time, that was all.

"But aren't you going to stop it?" I asked. "Recover the apparatus and switch it off?"

Reflectively Jeremiah, after peering briefly into the cavity, shook his head.

"To get down there, you will observe," he stated, "one would have to come within — er, range. I don't think I care to do that again. And the meteor-magna is lost. Probably we could never locate it again. So the apparatus would be useless.

"No, Lucius, I can see many disadvantages now to my scheme to by-pass space. It was brilliant, of course, but impractical. Difficult to control; and anyway, human beings do quite enough traveling about as it is. It is bad for their nervous systems, and I am inclined to think it gives them peptic ulcers. I will just let the whole affair run down in its natural course."

He paused a moment, as still again the frantic rats, eager cat, and madly straining dog hurried by and disappeared.

"You know, Lucius," he murmured, staring at the point where they had winked out, "a philosopher would make something of that single-minded chase around infinity, hunter and hunted, running and running and never getting anywhere. I think there's probably a moral in it some place."

And that was that. All the way back to town, both of us were silent. I'd lost my hat and ruined my clothes, but that's getting off lightly from one of Jeremiah Jupiter's experiments.

As for Jupiter, I thought he was regretting the loss of a machine that might have had world-shaking consequences. But when he dropped me off at my apartment, he only said:

"I do hope nobody goes up there to look at the view. Until after next Sunday, anyway. It would make me feel very bad to pick up the paper and read I had killed somebody with a bullet fired a week before."

*Zenna Henderson teaches the first grade in Phoenix, and has been writing ever since she herself was in the third grade. She has published occasional poetry and one juvenile book, but no previous adult fiction (though she started her first novel in the seventh grade). We're very happy to present her first published short story here and to assure you that there'll be more in later issues of F&SF. (It's gratifying to see how many of our "first" writers repeat, and admirably.) As fathers ourselves, we have never been quite sure how primary grade teachers maintain their sanity; but Mrs. Henderson has found one way of survival: to use her intimate knowledge of children in fictional studies of the terrible gap between child and man.*

## *Come on, Wagon!*

by ZENNA HENDERSON

I DON'T like kids — never have. They're too uncanny. For one thing, there's no bottom to their eyes. They haven't learned to pull down their mental curtains the way adults have. For another thing, there's so much they don't know. And not knowing things makes them know lots of other things grown-ups can't know. That sounds confusing and it is. But look at it this way. Every time you teach a kid something, you teach him a hundred things that are impossible because that one thing is so. By the time we grow up, our world is so hedged around by impossibilities that it's a wonder we ever try anything new.

Anyway, I don't like kids, so I guess it's just as well that I've stayed a bachelor.

Now take Thaddeus. I don't like Thaddeus. Oh, he's a fine kid, smarter than most — he's my nephew — but he's too young. I'll start liking him one of these days when he's ten or eleven. No, that's still too young. I guess when his voice starts cracking and he begins to slick his hair down, I'll get to liking him fine. Adolescence ends lots more than it begins.

The first time I ever really got acquainted with Thaddeus was the Christmas he was three. He was a solemn little fellow, hardly a smile out of him all day, even with the avalanche of everything to thrill a kid. Starting first thing Christmas Day, he made me feel uneasy. He stood still in the middle of the excited squealing bunch of kids that crowded around the Christmas



tree in the front room at the folks' place. He was holding a big rubber ball with both hands and looking at the tree with his eyes wide with wonder. I was sitting right by him in the big chair and I said, "How do you like it, Thaddeus?"

He turned his big solemn eyes to me and, for a long time, all I could see was the deep, deep reflections in his eyes of the glitter and glory of the tree and a special shiningness that originated far back in his own eyes. Then he blinked slowly and said solemnly, "Fine."

Then the mob of kids swept him away as they all charged forward to claim their Grampa-gift from under the tree. When the crowd finally dissolved and scattered all over the place with their play-toys, there was Thaddeus squatting solemnly by the little red wagon that had fallen to him. He was examining it intently, inch by inch, but only with his eyes. His hands were pressed between his knees and his chest as he squatted.

"Well, Thaddeus," his mother's voice was a little provoked. "Go play with your wagon. Don't you like it?"

Thaddeus turned his face up to her in that blind, unseeing way little children have.

"Sure," he said and, standing up, tried to take the wagon in his arms.

"Oh for pity sakes," his mother laughed. "You don't carry a wagon, Thaddeus." And aside to us, "Sometimes I wonder. Do you suppose he's got all his buttons?"

"Now, Jean," our brother Clyde leaned back in his chair. "Don't heckle the kid. Go on, Thaddeus. Take the wagon outside."

So what does Thaddeus do but start for the door, saying over his shoulder, "Come on, Wagon."

Clyde laughed. "It's not that easy, Punkin-Yaller, you've gotta have pull to get along in this world."

So Jean showed Thaddeus how and he pulled the wagon outdoors, looking down at the handle in a puzzled way, absorbing this latest rule for acting like a big boy.

Jean was embarrassed the way parents are when their kids act normal around other people.

"Honest. You'd think he never saw a wagon before."

"He never did," I said idly. "Not his own, anyway." And had the feeling that I had said something profound, but wasn't quite sure what.

The whole deal would have gone completely out of my mind if it hadn't been for one more little incident. I was out by the barn waiting for Dad. Mom was making him change his pants before he demonstrated his new tractor for me. I saw Thaddeus loading rocks into his little red wagon. Beyond the rock pile, I could see that he had started a play house or ranch

of some kind, laying the rocks out to make rooms or corrals or whatever. He finished loading the wagon and picked up another rock that took both arms to carry, then he looked down at the wagon.

"Come on, Wagon." And he walked over to his play-place.

*And the wagon went with him*, trundling along over the uneven ground, following at his heels like a puppy.

I blinked and inventoried rapidly the Christmas Cheer I had imbibed. It wasn't enough for an explanation. I felt a kind of cold grue creep over me.

Then Thaddeus emptied the wagon and the two of them went back for more rocks. He was just going to pull the same thing again when a big boy-cousin came by and laughed at him.

"Hey, Thaddeus, how you going to pull your wagon with both hands full? It won't go unless you pull it."

"Oh," said Thaddeus and looked off after the cousin who was headed for the back porch and some pie.

So Thaddeus dropped the big rock he had in his arms and looked at the wagon. After struggling with some profound thinking, he picked the rock up again and hooked a little finger over the handle of the wagon.

"Come on, Wagon," he said, and they trundled off together, the handle of the wagon still slanting back over the load while Thaddeus grunted along by it with his heavy arm-load.

I was glad Dad came just then, hooking the last strap of his striped overalls. We started into the barn together. I looked back at Thaddeus. He apparently figured he'd need his little finger on the next load, so he was squatting by the wagon, absorbed with a piece of flimsy red Christmas string. He had twisted one end around his wrist and was intent on tying the other to the handle of the little red wagon.

It wasn't so much that I avoided Thaddeus after that. It isn't hard for grown-ups to keep from mingling with kids. After all, they do live in two different worlds. Anyway, I didn't have much to do with Thaddeus for several years after that Christmas. There was the matter of a side trip to the South Pacific where even I learned that there are some grown-up impossibilities that are not always absolute. Then there was a hitch in the hospital where I waited for my legs to put themselves together again. I was luckier than most of the guys. The folks wrote often and regularly and kept me posted on all the home talk. Nothing spectacular, nothing special, just the old familiar stuff that makes home, home and folks, folks.

I hadn't thought of Thaddeus in a long time. I hadn't been around kids much and unless you deal with them, you soon forget them. But I remembered him plenty when I got the letter from Dad about Jean's new baby. The kid was a couple of weeks overdue and when it did come — a girl —

Jean's husband, Bert, was out at the farm checking with Dad on a land deal he had cooking. The baby came so quickly that Jean couldn't even make it to the hospital and when Mom called Bert, he and Dad headed for town together, but fast.

"Derned if I didn't have to hold my hair on," wrote Dad. "I don't think we hit the ground but twice all the way to town. Dern near over-shot the gate when we finally tore up the hill to their house. Thaddeus was playing out front and we dang near ran him down. Smashed his trike to flinders. I saw the handle bars sticking out from under the front wheel when I followed Bert in. Then I got to thinking that he'd get a flat parking on all that metal so I went out to move the car. Lucky I did. Bert musta forgot to set the brakes. Derned if that car wasn't headed straight for Thaddeus. He was walking right in front of it. Even had his hand on the bumper and the dern thing rolling right after him. I yelled and hit out for the car. But by the time I got there, it had stopped and Thaddeus was squatting by his wrecked trike. What do you suppose the little cuss said? 'Old car broke my trike. I made him get off.'"

"Can you beat it? Kids get the dernedest ideas. Lucky it wasn't much down hill, though. He'd have been hurt sure."

I lay with the letter on my chest and felt cold. Dad had forgotten that they "tore up the hill" and that the car must have rolled up the slope to get off Thaddeus' trike.

That night I woke up the ward yelling, "Come on, Wagon!"

It was some months later when I saw Thaddeus again. He and a half a dozen other nephews — and the one persistent niece — were in a tearing hurry to be somewhere else and nearly mobbed Dad and me on the front porch as they boiled out of the house with mouths and hands full of cookies. They all stopped long enough to give me the once-over and fire a machine gun volley with my crutches, then they disappeared down the lane on their bikes, heads low, rear-ends high, and every one of them being bombers at the tops of their voices.

I just had time enough to notice that Thaddeus had lanked out and was just one of the kids as he grinned engagingly at me with the two-tooth gap in his front teeth.

"Did you ever notice anything odd about Thaddeus?" I pulled out the makin's.

"Thaddeus?" Dad glanced up at me from firing up his battered old corn-cob pipe. "Not particularly. Why?"

"Oh, nothing." I ran my tongue along the paper and rolled the cigarette shut. "He just always seemed kinda different."

"Well, he's always been kinda slow about some things. Not that he's dumb. Once he catches on, he's as smart as anyone, but he's sure pulled some funny ones."

"Give me a fer-instance," I said, wondering if he'd remember the trike deal.

"Well, coupla years ago at a wienie roast he was toting something around wrapped in a paper napkin. Jean saw him put it in his pocket and she thought it was probably a dead frog or a beetle or something like that, so she made him fork it over. She unfolded the napkin and derned if there wasn't a big live coal in it. Dern thing flamed right up in her hand. Thaddeus bellered like a bull calf. Said he wanted to take it home cause it was pretty. How he ever carried it around that long without setting himself afire is what got me."

"That's Thaddeus," I said: "odd."

"Yeah." Dad was firing his pipe again, flicking the burned match down, to join the dozen or so others by the porch railing. "I guess you might call him odd. But he'll outgrow it. He hasn't pulled anything like that in a long time."

"They do outgrow it," I said. "Thank God." And I think it was a real prayer. I *don't* like kids. "By the way, where's Clyde?"

"Down in the East Pasture, plowing. Say, that tractor I got that last Christmas you were here is a bear-cat. It's lasted me all this time and I've never had to do a lick of work on it. Clyde's using it today."

"When you get a good tractor you got a good one," I said. "Guess I'll go down and see the old son-of-a-gun — Clyde, I mean. Haven't seen him in a coon's age." I gathered up my crutches.

Dad scrambled to his feet. "Better let me run you down in the pick-up. I've gotta go over to Jesperson's anyway."

"O. K." I said. "Won't be long till I can throw these things away." So we piled in the pick-up and headed for the East Pasture.

We were ambushed at the pump corner by the kids and were killed variously by P-38's, atomic bombs, ack-ack and the Lone Ranger's six-guns. Then we lowered our hands which had been raised all this time and Dad reached out and collared the nearest nephew.

"Come along, Punkin-Yaller. That blasted Holstein has busted out again. You get her out of the alfalfa and see if you can find where she got through this time."

"Aw, gee whiz!" The kid — and of course it was Thaddeus — climbed into the back of the pick-up. "That dern cow."

We started up with a jerk and I turned half around in the seat to look back at Thaddeus.

"Remember your little red wagon?" I yelled over the clatter.

"Red wagon?" Thaddeus yelled back. His face lighted. "Red wagon?"

I could tell he had remembered and then, as plainly as the drawing of a shade, his eyes went shadowy and he yelled, "Yeah, kinda." And turned around to wave violently at the unnoticing kids behind us.

So, I thought, he is outgrowing it. Then spent the rest of the short drive trying to figure just what it was he was outgrowing.

Dad dumped Thaddeus out at the alfalfa field and took me on across the canal and let me out by the pasture gate.

"I'll be back in about an hour if you want to wait. Might as well ride home."

"I might start back afoot," I said. "It'd feel good to stretch my legs again."

"I'll keep a look out for you on my way back." And he rattled away in the ever-present cloud of dust.

I had trouble managing the gate. It's one of those wire affairs that open by slipping a loop off the end post and lifting the bottom of it out of another loop. This one was taut and hard to handle. I just got it opened when Clyde turned the far corner and started back toward me, the plow behind the tractor curling up red-brown ribbons in its wake. It was the last go-round to complete the field.

I yelled "Hi!" and waved a crutch at him.

He yelled "Hi!" back at me. What came next was too fast and too far away for me to be sure what actually happened. All I remember was a snort and roar and the tractor bucked and bowed. There was a short yell from Clyde and the shriek of wires pulling loose from a fence post followed by a choking smothering silence.

Next thing I knew, I was panting half-way to the tractor, my crutches sinking exasperatingly into the soft ploughed earth. A nightmare year later I knelt by the stalled tractor and called, "Hey, Clyde!"

Clyde looked up at me, a half grin, half grimace on his muddy face.

"Hi. Get this thing off me, will you. I need that leg." Then his eyes turned up white and he passed out.

The tractor had toppled him from the seat and then run over top of him, turning into the fence and coming to rest with one huge wheel half burying his leg in the soft dirt and pinning him against a fence post. The far wheel was on the edge of the irrigation ditch that bordered the field just beyond the fence. The huge bulk of the machine was balanced on the raw edge of nothing and it looked like a breath would send it on over — then God have mercy on Clyde. It didn't help much to notice that the red-brown dirt was steadily becoming redder around the imprisoned leg.

I knelt there, paralyzed with panic. There was nothing I could do. I didn't

dare try to start the tractor. If I touched it, it might go over. Dad was gone for an hour. I couldn't make it by foot to the house in time.

Then all at once out of nowhere I heard a startled "Gee whiz!" and there was Thaddeus standing goggle-eyed on the ditch bank.

Something exploded with a flash of light inside my head and I whispered to myself, *Now take it easy. Don't scare the kid, don't startle him.*

"Gee whiz!" said Thaddeus again. "What happened?"

I took a deep breath. "Old Tractor ran over Uncle Clyde. Make it get off."

Thaddeus didn't seem to hear me. He was intent on taking in the whole shebang.

"Thaddeus," I said, "make Tractor get off."

Thaddeus looked at me with that blind, unseeing stare he used to have. I prayed silently, *Don't let him be too old. Oh God, don't let him be too old.* And Thaddeus jumped across the ditch. He climbed gingerly through the barbed wire fence and squatted down by the tractor, his hands caught between his chest and knees. He bent his head forward and I stared urgently at the soft vulnerable nape of his neck. Then he turned his blind eyes to me again.

"Tractor doesn't want to."

I felt a yell ball up in my throat, but I caught it in time. *Don't scare the kid, I thought. Don't scare him.*

"Make Tractor get off anyway," I said as matter-of-factly as I could manage. "He's hurting Uncle Clyde."

Thaddeus turned and looked at Clyde.

"He isn't hollering."

"He can't. He's unconscious." Sweat was making my palms slippery.

"Oh." Thaddeus examined Clyde's quiet face curiously. "I never saw anybody unconscious before."

"Thaddeus." My voice was sharp. "Make — Tractor — get — off."

Maybe I talked too loud. Maybe I used the wrong words, but Thaddeus looked up at me and I saw the shutters close in his eyes. They looked up at me, blue and shallow and bright.

"You mean start the tractor?" His voice was brisk as he stood up. "Gee whiz! Grampa told us kids to leave the tractor alone. It's dangerous for kids. I don't know whether I know how —"

"That's not what I meant," I snapped, my voice whetted on the edge of my despair. "Make it get off Uncle Clyde. He's dying."

"But I can't! You can't just make a tractor do something. You gotta run it." His face was twisting with approaching tears.

"You could if you wanted to," I argued, knowing how useless it was. "Uncle Clyde will die if you don't."

"But I can't! I don't know how! Honest I don't." Thaddeus scrubbed one bare foot in the ploughed dirt, sniffing miserably.

I knelt beside Clyde and slipped my hand inside his dirt-smeared shirt. I pulled my hand out and rubbed the stained palm against my thigh. "Never mind," I said bluntly, "it doesn't matter now. He's dead."

Thaddeus started to bawl, not from grief but bewilderment. He knew I was put out with him and he didn't know why. He crooked his arm over his eyes and leaned against a fence post, sobbing noisily. I shifted myself over in the dark furrow until my shadow sheltered Clyde's quiet face from the hot afternoon sun. I clasped my hands palm to palm between my knees and waited for Dad.

I knew as well as anything that that *once* Thaddeus could have helped. Why couldn't he then, when the need was so urgent? Well, maybe he really *had* outgrown his strangeness. Or it might be that he actually couldn't do anything just because Clyde and I were grown-ups. Maybe if it had been another kid —

Sometimes my mind gets cold trying to figure it out. Especially when I get the answer that kids and grown-ups live in two worlds so alien and separate that the gap can't be bridged even to save a life. Whatever the answer is — I still don't like kids.



*Coming . . . in our next issue (on sale in mid-December):*

MRS. POPPLEDORE'S ID, in which R. Bretnor, discoverer of the *gnurrs*, takes psychiatrists and poltergeister for an hilarious ride;

THE HOLE IN THE MOON, in which Idris Seabright offers a poetic vision at once beautiful and terrible;

plus a new incident in Gavan's Bar; stories by J. J. Coupling, H. B. Fyfe, Kenneth Cassens, John Wyndham and others; another of F&SF's "first stories," by Mildred Clingerman; and an unusual historical discovery, Edward Everett Hale's HANDS OFF: the earliest known fiction on the Worlds-of-If theme, by the author of THE MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY.

# Recommended Reading

by THE EDITORS

SINCE THE SCIENCE ELEMENT in so much current "science fiction" is at best negligible, at worst erroneous, it's fortunate that we can turn for mental stimulus to a growing number of books of imaginative factuality — non-fictional projections of future scientific probabilities.

The Old Master at this sort of thing is, of course, Willy Ley, who has a unique gift for popularizing without debasing, combining profound scholarship and easy charm, with never a trace of "writing down." The latest Ley, *ROCKETS, MISSILES, AND SPACE TRAVEL* (Viking), is probably his most important volume to date; this fifth revision and third retitling of his classic on rocketry is detailedly rewritten and vastly expanded — an essential item for your library even if you own the earlier editions. Whether you're interested in present scientific fact, logical prophecy, or the history of science fiction, you'll find this an invaluable book.

Ley's earlier book this year, *DRAGONS IN AMBER* (Viking), has less of the speculative science fiction element than most of his works; but the entrancing explorations of little-known facts in these "adventures of a romantic naturalist" should delight every intelligent reader. And if by any sad chance you missed the superb Ley-Bonestell *THE CONQUEST OF SPACE* (Viking, 1949), let its receipt of the International Fantasy Award for 1950 send you scurrying to the nearest bookstore.

Fully up to the Ley level, both for scientific intelligence and for writing skill, is Professor A. M. Low's *WHAT'S THE WORLD COMING TO?* (Lippincott). Steering a careful course between conservative stodginess and eager wildness, Low examines the probable developments of the next fifty years in countless fields, scientific and sociological, with stimulating and provocative results. Science fiction readers will be especially fascinated by his speculations on the sports of the future, and possibly perturbed by his dim view of the immediate likelihood of space travel.

The most interesting recent fictional extrapolation is L. Sprague de Camp's *ROGUE QUEEN* (Doubleday), which ventures into an almost virgin (which is perhaps not the *mot juste*) field: the interplanetary cultural aspects of sex. Lively and unusual thinking, a vigorous plot, and a most appealing non-human heroine make the best de Camp novel in many years.



A. E. van Vogt is also at his best in some time in *THE WEAPON SHOPS OF ISHER* (Greenberg), a surprisingly successful rewriting and integration of three of the famous "Weapon Shop" stories — possibly for postgraduate science fiction readers, with its typically grandiose and limitless van Vogt concepts, but a fine excitingly involved melodrama. Another series rewrite, also for postgraduates, is Will Stewart's *SEETEE SHIP* (Gnome) — marred by occasional crude writing and characterization, but full of rich gimmicks on contra-terrene matter and reversed causation . . . a far better job than the unfortunate *SEETEE SHOCK*.

Of the several hard-cover issues of "primitive" science fiction, only John Taine's *SEEDS OF LIFE* (Fantasy Press) has much to offer the modern reader. In 1931 it must have seemed head and shoulders above its rivals, and even today it can still compete as one of the better treatments of mutation-through-radiation, with a notable tragic study of the disintegration of a superman.

Not precisely science fiction, but as wonderful as it is unclassifiable, is Carlo Beuf's *THE INNOCENCE OF PASTOR MÜLLER* (Duell). Central European writers can produce an incomparable sort of absurd yet touching satire; if you've ever liked Karel Capek or Leo Perutz or Hinko Gottlieb, this may well be your favorite book of the year. (Warning: Do *not* read J. Donald Adams' introduction, which reveals far too much of the surprisingly twisted plot.)

In supernatural fantasy, the one outstanding recent item is *MORNING FOR MR. PROTHERO* (McKay), by Jane Oliver, who manages to pass a minor miracle by taking the familiar *OUTWARD BOUND* theme of the afterlife and making it completely fresh and charming — a sort of lighter, more feminine, less complex Charles Williams.

In the reprint department, there are two *musts*: That 1911 classic of factual time-travel, the Moberly-Jourdain *AN ADVENTURE*, is at long last back in print in America (Coward-McCann). And *THE OMNIBUS JULES VERNE* (Lippincott) contains almost 300,000 words by the Master: *AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS*, which is not science fiction but still probably Verne's masterpiece; two of his greatest scientific romances, *20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA* and *FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON* (complete with its sequel); and a trashy novelet (not science fiction), *THE BLOCKADE RUNNERS*, which seems to have wandered in by mistake. (Appeal to all publishers: Since Verne is in the public domain, with no author's royalties, when will you realize that you could afford to commission good modern translations, which are so badly needed?)

*There are two principal ways of treating the supernatural in fiction. One is the Gothic method: pile up ruined castles, creaking hinges, howling winds and eerie moonlight until you create a world apart in which ghostly events seem an inevitable part of their weird setting. The other (and to our minds far more disquieting) method is the realistic: create in detail the scenes and people of ordinary life and let the impossible gradually impinge upon them, until it carries the same conviction of reality as that life itself. James S. Hart has earlier shown his talent for giving new treatment to old subjects in that best of modern vampire stories, *The Traitor*; this time he lets the horror of the unknown filter into a hardheaded New England murder trial — a trial, we might add, a good deal more convincing and accurate than many you'll find in criminous fiction . . . but with a very different outcome.*

## *The House in Arbor Lane*

by JAMES S. HART

SOME of the ancient phraseology that was a holdover from the Colonial courts of the State was still in usage there. Hence it was that the Clerk of the Court addressed the jury after it was completed and sworn:

"To the counts in the indictment, Jonathan Geoffrey Lawrence has heretofore pleaded and said thereof he is not guilty of wilful murder, and Katherine Anne Gray has heretofore pleaded and said thereof she is not guilty of being an accessory before, during and after the fact of wilful murder. And for trial they put themselves upon their country.

"You are now sworn to try the issue. If they are guilty on the said counts, you are to say so, and if they are not guilty on the said counts, you are to say so, and no more. Good men and true, stand fast together and hearken to your evidence."

It was not a day for murder or for the trial of murder, or for hearing the dark and bloody tales that go with murder. Beyond the dun-paneled courtroom was the gentle riotousness of spring, with all its smells and sights and sounds. Children surged to and from school in the joyous knowledge that school would soon be done, and in the old town square the graceful elms invited laziness on the benches beneath.

Within the courthouse where judgment of the "issue" was to be coldly balanced, there was no place for the grace and freshness of the year's rebirth. But yet some of the light from the outer world seemed determined to find its way to the girl who sat at the defense counsel table, and to the young man who sat with her. Both of them were in sharp contrast to the massiveness of their lawyer, Mr. Blundell, a big man with a leonine head, who really should have rumbled like a tank when he walked. For both of them were slim and finely-wrought, rather in the fashion of bright steel blades whose metal has been tempered in fires which only they know.

She was fair and oval of face, with a cameo-like perfection. Although that is not to say she was un-physical or removed from life. On the contrary, she was vital and fresh, and when she smiled at the man it was as though some of that outdoor light of spring had flooded into the place.

He was half a head taller than she, and very lean. His dark hair fitted closely to his head, like one type of Norman casque. His hands, with the long sensitive fingers of the artist, touched hers at rare moments, and at such times they exchanged looks as though to renew vows which gave them strength.

Fifty-six talesmen had been called and two days had elapsed before the jury of twelve men was completed. During that two days there were veiled references by both lawyers, especially by Mr. Blundell, to matters of the occult world. But most of the jurors said they knew nothing about those things, nor about Freudian matters. In fact, all but one gave the impression they thought Freud meant something about sex, and sex wasn't a popular subject for discussion in a small New England town. The exception was Professor Howland from the University, the jury foreman.

The Professor would never have been accepted if the District Attorney had not used up all his peremptory challenges. Mr. Grimes, a precise and cold man of insignificant stature and a gray face, didn't want a teacher of psychology on the panel, but he couldn't help it.

The issue was joined between the People of the Commonwealth and defendants Lawrence and Gray when Mr. Grimes advanced to within five calculated paces of the box and began his outline of the State's case.

"It is my privilege," he said, as emotionally as he would order meat from the butcher, who was Juryman Number Five, "to tell you what the State confidently expects to prove, and upon which it will ask you in justice and for society's protection to return verdicts of guilty as charged on both indictments."

It was clear from the start that Mr. Grimes was going to put his trust in hard-headed men. Perhaps, because of what was to come, he distrusted an expert in psychology. In any case, he tended to ignore Professor Howland

and talk to the others, a sentence or two in turn to each one. But the professor didn't seem to mind. He caressed his Vandyke occasionally and listened with great attention, rather like a child being instructed in the rudiments of spelling.

"You will hear a lot of strange statements before we are finished." Mr. Grimes was very dry. "But none of them will come from me or the prosecution's witnesses. We shall stick to the facts — because facts are what you and I and His Honor understand."

Thus, Mr. Grimes began his organization of a little club of sensible men: himself, his witnesses, the learned Judge and the jury — with the possible exclusion of Professor Howland. Definitely, he excluded the defendants and their counsel as being beyond the pale of decent citizens.

"The State will prove beyond reasonable doubt," he said, "that on the tenth of April last this man and this woman went, under suspicious circumstances, to the home of Agnes De Salle in Arbor Lane. They were received there for reasons which the State does not know and considers immaterial to the issue.

"We shall prove that certain events transpired within that house which was inhabited by a trusting and defenseless woman of some fifty years, and that these events culminated when this man murdered that defenseless woman, and this — this girl who sits here was present. That she knew he was committing murder, that she stood by while he did it, and that she did not immediately alarm the authorities thereafter — thereby placing herself under the charge you have heard."

Mr. Grimes advanced close to the jury box and rested his hands on the wooden rail.

"It will not be necessary to adduce much testimony in proof of these charges," he said, slowly, clearly. "I have no doubt whatsoever that you will see and hear both of these defendants sitting in that witness chair *admit* the accusations I have just outlined."

Mr. Grimes retreated. Juryman Seven, who farmed forty acres on the north side of town, looked at Juryman Eight, the town carpenter, and his face unquestionably inquired: "Then what the hell are *we* doing here?"

Judge Ephraim Tiplady came up from a lolling position in his chair high above the courtroom floor and looked with puzzlement at the defense counsel table. Judge Tiplady, a sort of modern "Daniel come to judgment," had a high reputation for fair adjudication and knowledge of the law.

Mr. Blundell, under the court's inquiring look, stirred in his chair like a hibernating animal feeling the spring thaws.

"No objections," he rumbled, "unless my learned brother inserts the expression 'cold-blooded' in front of murder. I don't particularly like the

use and repetition of the word 'defenseless' in relation to the deceased, but let it go." And Mr. Blundell seemed to sink back to partial sleep.

There was a great rustling about the seventy-five spectators, all the courtroom would hold, as they settled in their chairs. The rustle was a whisper and it seemed to say: "There you are! We're going to see something here, all right."

Mr. Grimes was satisfied and quickly brought his opening to an end. His first witness was the County Medical Examiner, who first had to rid himself of a spate of anatomical terms which no one but he understood, and then be allowed to translate them into layman's language. The gist of it was that Agnes De Salle had been a female of normal health consistent with her age until a lethal object had collided with her skull just above the right ear. She did not die of heart failure, diabetes or undernourishment, but solely from the impact of an object against her skull.

Here, Mr. Grimes introduced in evidence a three-branch candlestick, with a thick base, and heavily constructed of brass. He guided the Medical Examiner into an estimate that such an object could have struck the fatal blow.

Next came the Stratford Recorder of Deeds, who testified that the house and land, numbered so-and-so in the survey maps of the town, had been purchased by Agnes De Salle through an agent three months prior to her death. It developed that he had never seen the woman, and neither had the next witness, Chief Clerk of the Tax Department, who was called to testify to the assessed value of the property.

During this small parade of witnesses, Mr. Blundell seemed sunk in a desperate lethargy. He aroused himself to mumble "No questions" before each witness stepped down. If the two defendants thought he was neglecting their interests, they showed no sign of it. Lawrence listened to the testimony given, but rather with the air of a man at a moderately interesting play, the outcome of which, after all, can't possibly have any relation to reality. Frequently, there passed between him and the girl those glances which were far more potent than words.

At the afternoon session, the prosecution reached the police stage of its presentation. Several beefy men in uniform were led stumblingly through a recital of their tales. Being policemen and prone to recite what they wrote into reports, they didn't make star witnesses; they bumbled about like actors given the wrong cue, but still they presented a picture coherent enough for the jury to understand and damning as far as the defendants were concerned.

It added up to the undisputed facts that on April eleventh, some fifteen hours after the crime and when the police still didn't know there was a

crime, the defendants appeared at the Stratford police station and said there was a dead woman in the house at Arbor Lane; that the defendant Lawrence was responsible for the death, but that he had acted in defense of the defendant Gray and himself against the attacks of Agnes De Salle and a short, dark man, of whom no trace had been discovered since the crime.

Asked to explain their whereabouts in the fifteen-hour interim, the defendants agreed on a story that they had been terrified and fled; they had taken a bus to the city and there wandered about during most of the night. During the early hours of the next morning they had decided they must return and face whatever they had to face.

Chief of Police Bretton, who had put on his best uniform and gold shield for the occasion, testified that robbery might well have been the motive for the crime. This, however, was impossible to substantiate, he said, because no one knew anything about the deceased; no one knew what money or valuables she kept about the house, and therefore no one could tell what was missing.

It was at this point that Mr. Blundell came out of hibernation. He took the witness on cross-examination, but strangely enough he passed over any mention of the confession by Lawrence that he had wielded the candelabrum and by Gray that she had been present during what Mr. Blundell referred to during the entire trial as "the fatal transaction." Instead, he concentrated on the condition of the house as the police found it.

"Beyond the fact that the owner was dead, was the house in any way upset?" he asked. "I mean did it have the appearance of having been ransacked?"

"Well, not that I noticed," said the Chief.

"You would have noticed it, wouldn't you? Didn't you go there to discover, among other things, whether robbery was the motive?"

"I suppose so."

"Never mind what you suppose." Mr. Blundell's lethargy fell away and he roared like a wounded lion. "Answer yes or no!"

"Yes." The Chief fingered his gold badge for reassurance.

"As a matter of fact," and Mr. Blundell poked a thick finger under the Chief's nose, "the house was in immaculate condition, wasn't it? There wasn't a drawer pulled out, not a stick of furniture moved, not a rug upturned. Isn't that so?"

"That's the way it would appear," said the Chief, reluctantly.

"Was it or wasn't it?" roared Mr. Blundell.

"It was."

"If the Court please," said Mr. Blundell, as though tired out by his effort, "I move that all testimony of this witness insinuating that robbery

was a possible motive, when he has just admitted that there was not the faintest scrap of evidence to support such testimony, be stricken from the record."

The motion was granted, and Mr. Blundell's victory was far more dramatic before the jury than if he had objected and prevented the testimony in the first place. "No further questions," he said, turning his back on the Police Chief.

Shortly thereafter, with the admission of police notes on the confessions, the State's case came to an end, simply because the State had nothing further to offer. Its charges were based on the corpus delicti, what two people said had happened, and what the police found at Arbor Lane. The presentation had required one day.

The next morning spring was determinedly rampant with its smells and sounds; not all the rules of evidence could prevent some of its freshness being introduced through the open windows when Mr. Blundell lumbered forward to address the jury. He reversed Mr. Grimes's procedure and began with Professor Howland as he slowly surveyed the peers selected to try his clients.

"I'm not a sworn witness in this issue," Mr. Blundell said, "and therefore I'm not going to give any testimony, direct or otherwise. You are not obliged to believe what any lawyer says here. In fact, there aren't many that I would believe because lawyers will say almost anything to get an acquittal — or a conviction. That's the uncomfortable truth, and so I'm not going to confuse you by forcing you to decide whether or not I'm an honest man. You'll have enough to do without that."

Mr. Blundell leaned on one elbow and talked confidentially, giving the jury the distinct impression that he didn't give a damn who heard him as long as they did.

"You know," he said, "I don't dispute anything that's been said here since the issue was joined, except one thing, and that is the word 'wilful' in the indictment. I admit that the defendant Lawrence committed an act which resulted in the death of Agnes De Salle — but it wasn't a wilful act. He did just what you and you, all of you and I, too, would have done under the same circumstances — if we were lucky enough and quick enough.

"And that is about all I've got to say to you because, as I said earlier, I'm not going to give testimony. Just one word or two more. A great writer named Shakespeare, who looked into the human heart almost as deeply as God, caused one of his characters to say under strange and weird circumstances: 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'

"Will you do me the favor and my clients the justice of keeping that wise

sentence in your minds? Will you keep your hearts open and receptive to the things in heaven and earth that we know not of? I presume to ask that of you because I am now about to put a man's life into your hands. Consider carefully before you take that life."

He turned away, a bulky, round-backed figure, and faced the counsel table.

"Jonathan Geoffrey Lawrence! Under the law you may take the stand in your own defense, or you may decline to do so, and no man may hold your failure against you."

Every eye watched when the young man rose and put his hand on the girl's briefly. Again, that rustle whispered the audience's anticipation as he walked to the witness chair.

Quickly, casually, as though making introductions at a cocktail party, Mr. Blundell established the defendant Lawrence, aged thirty-two, and unmarried.

"What do you do for a living, Mr. Lawrence?"

"I am a painter of pictures."

"What kind of pictures — for art galleries?"

"Sometimes, but chiefly I do illustrations for fiction stories in magazines."

"How much are you paid for such a picture?"

"I object," Mr. Grimes said, incisively. "What he gets for a picture has no relevance here."

"May I," growled Mr. Blundell, "be allowed to show that my client doesn't have to commit murder for economic reasons?"

Two jurors tittered and looked guilty; Judge Tiplady examined the ceiling carefully, and Mr. Grimes sat down, muttering that he withdrew the objection.

"It varies," said Lawrence. "From three hundred dollars up. I have been paid a thousand."

Mr. Blundell felt that it had gone off all right. For a man to describe himself as an "artist" to a jury of farmers, butchers and carpenters was one thing; for him to say he painted pictures and got up to a thousand dollars for them was something very much within their understanding.

"Now, Mr. Lawrence, you are out of my hands, in a manner of speaking." Mr. Blundell spread his palms eloquently. "I'll ask you just to tell this court and jury what happened preceding, during and after the fatal transaction, and I'm going to sit down while you tell it. That is, I hope I am. And when it's finished, Mr. District Attorney, the witness will be yours."

Lawrence half-turned to the jury box, and like his counsel surveyed the twelve men starting with Professor Howland. His voice when he spoke was a clear baritone and his words unhesitating.



"You will have to go back with me, not to April 10, but five months before — to early November last year — when I was commissioned to do a picture to illustrate a magazine story. We had a conference on it — the author and the magazine editors and myself. What they wanted was a picture of a country house with individuality. There was no detailed description of the dwelling in the story. I was to create a house out of my imagination to fit the spirit and content of the story. And that's what I did.

"I used no model. I thought I could do better by making a general plan and letting the details grow as I painted. It worked well, as it happened. In ten days I was finished and the editors were pleased. On November 12 I sent it on, and two days later the editor wrote me a very enthusiastic letter." He paused and looked at Juror Eight, then said slowly: "From the moment I dispatched the picture to the magazine, I have neither seen it nor touched it."

"May it please the Court," said Mr. Blundell, from the depths of his slouch, "to accept the offering of defense exhibits at the close of this witness's testimony?"

"There being no objection, it may be done that way." Judge Tiplady nodded to the witness.

"I would like to explain clearly what happened during the painting of the picture." Jonathan Lawrence frowned a little. "But it may be difficult. I worked hard on it, but I've worked hard and under pressure before. This was different. It seemed that after the first blocking, the first rough plan, the picture was no longer mine. I mean the details came out without any volition on my part. The thing grew, put itself together, yet I was dog-tired at the end of each day. Something of myself seemed to be going into the painting." He passed a hand over his face and seemed to falter. "I was being directed and it came out in all its detail the way it did because it had to. I can tell you no clearer story than that."

Through his eyelashes, Mr. Blundell saw the tight mouths, the steady eyes of the good men and true, but the New England faces told him nothing he could read.

"Then came the day the thing was finished, and I was glad. I knew it fitted what was wanted, but I wanted to be rid of it. Yet, I was hesitant. I made a few slight changes around the roof and the decorative woodwork. It was all unnecessary to the picture, but it was as though something else was needed before it was — well, safe to let it go.

"And then, something happened to me. It was late afternoon. The light was failing as I touched the canvas for the last time — high up near the roof. Was I asleep? I don't know, because when I was next conscious I was still standing before the easel with a brush in my hand."

Lawrence gripped the rail of the witness stand; stared into the faces as though trying to measure the degree of their interest.

"In the interim of unconsciousness, or whatever it was, I was taken away from there and I stood in a room filled with old-fashioned furniture. The room was dim, the corners dark and obscure. On a winged sofa under the window lay a girl. Her eyes were closed. What followed was swift and . . ."

He stopped. The District Attorney was on his feet, clearly a man whose patience had been tried to the limit.

"Your Honor! I am forced to enter objection to this nonsense. I've sat through an interminable tale about a painting, although God knows what relevance it has to the murder of a defenseless woman. But dreams, your Honor! Do we have to have dreams?" Mr. Grimes was not addressing the judge; he was appealing to the jury. Two of them seemed to give almost imperceptible nods of agreement; the rest remained stony-faced.

In response to the Judge's raised eyebrows, Mr. Blundell got up.

"This defendant, your Honor, is on trial for his life, which is no insignificant event to him. The police have testified that he admits killing a woman. They say it was in cold blood and wilfully. He is now telling *why* he killed her. If there is anything in common law or the statutes which prevents a defendant from attempting to justify the crime he stands charged with, I don't know what it is."

"You assure me of the ultimate relevancy of this testimony?" The Judge looked down at Mr. Blundell.

"Upon my oath as an attorney."

"Objection overruled. You may proceed."

"I was about to say that what followed was swift and horrible. A door opened and a woman entered. Behind her came a man, but his face was shadowed and I never saw it clearly. The woman's face I saw as clearly as I see yours. She stepped carefully as a cat across the room, avoiding the clutter of furniture. She drew a knife out of the wide sleeve of her dress and plunged it into the body of the girl."

Professor Howland leaned forward, half out of the jury box. Mr. Blundell thought the foreman was going to speak, but nothing happened. Lawrence went on.

"I seemed disembodied, not a participant at all, just a witness to that awful thing. But more, I couldn't move because — because the man in the shadow held the power to prevent me. I wanted desperately to stop it, but some sort of bonds were upon me — and he, from a distance, had put them there. I saw the flash of the knife blade as sharp and clear as that ray of sunshine."

Every head in the jury box turned to follow his finger pointed at a sun-

beam that was heavy with floating motes of dust. Mr. Blundell settled deeper in his chair and seemed to have no interest in the affair. The room was very quiet for a moment.

"I simply could not move to prevent the knife — to stop it. He in the shadows held me." Then Lawrence smiled faintly. "These things I have told you occurred what seemed a long time ago now — six months before April 10. I have finished with that part. On April 10 I boarded the bus in Amesbury to go to Winthrop."

The courtroom rustled and the jury sat up straighter, and the very air in the place seemed to say: "Now! Here it comes." Amesbury was to the south of Stratford and Winthrop was to the north, and Stratford was on the bus route. Mr. Blundell opened his eyes. He knew what the next line should be; it was part of his strategy, just as much as the questions about the price of paintings.

"My mother lives in Winthrop," Lawrence said, quietly. "I go to see her every three months because she can't come to see me. She's blind."

Through his lashes, Mr. Blundell watched the jury as it turned over in its mind the proposition that a young fellow, on the way to see his blind mother, stopped off on the way to commit a murder.

Lawrence pictured the scene and his words created something which the jury actually seemed to see enacted before them.

Bag in hand, he got on the bus. It had few passengers, and there were wide gaps of empty seats. He took his place immediately behind a couple — a girl in the seat by the window, a short, dark man beside her. With idle admiration, he saw the soft wave of ash-blond hair so close to his eyes. Twice he saw the soft line of her cheek and jaw when she turned to the window. The second time he became certain she was not looking out, but was trying to see his face out of the corner of her eye. Because of that, he was in a way ready when she twisted nearly all the way around.

"Don't be silly," she said, smiling. "Are you angry because of last night?" Lawrence saw the desperate appeal in her eyes.

"Silly, yourself," he said. "You wouldn't even look at me when I got on the bus. Who's angry now?"

"Well, you didn't offer to dance with me even once," she said.

It was a queer game of ad-libbing and he was groping desperately in the dark, but he suddenly knew what she wanted.

"Come and sit back here with me and we'll talk about it." He knew he had said the right thing when she got up quickly and squeezed past the dark man. Lawrence got up, too, and guided her to the long seat at the back of the bus. He left his hand under her arm because he felt her shaking.

"Easy, now!" He sat beside her. "What's wrong?"

"That man has a gun." She looked him fairly in the face. "I could see it in a holster under his right arm."

"Then he must be left-handed," said Lawrence, irrelevantly. He studied the back of the man's smooth hair and shaven neck. "He doesn't look like a policeman or anything like that. You don't know him?"

"No. I never saw him before, but he got on at the same place I did. Then he sat beside me when there were plenty of other seats. That's what frightened me when I saw the gun." She put her hand on his arm. "I don't know why I want to tell you, but I do. I'm Katherine Gray and I'm scared."

"I'm Jonathan Lawrence." He grinned at her. "I'm sorry you're scared, but it does sort of mean we've been properly introduced. Where are you going?"

The sentence was carelessly spoken, but it was the sentence which led him to the position in which he stood charged with murder in the Stratford Superior Court.

Katherine said she was going to Stratford to visit an aunt she had never seen. While the shadows lengthened outside the bus and the passengers grew fewer with each stop, she told him she hadn't looked forward to the trip, but felt she had to make it. Her parents were dead.

"Mother and Aunt Agnes were sisters," she said, "but Auntie was first engaged to Daddy. He broke it off and married mother, and they never heard from Aunt Agnes ever. Then recently, I got this letter and I was sorry for her. She's never married and she must be awfully lonely. She wrote that we two were the only members of the family left, and it would be un-Christian if we didn't heal this breach after all these years. I never even knew where she was before."

Jonathan had to admit to himself that he was fascinatedly watching the mobility of her mouth more than he was listening to her words. As they approached Stratford, he found himself reluctant to leave her.

"Tell you what," he said. "I'm in no great hurry. I'll get off and see that you get to your aunt's all right — just to make sure no one will bother you," with a glance at the dark man near the front of the bus.

"That's very kind of you." She touched his sleeve. "It's probably silly, but I did get a bit nervous. The driver told me if I got off just outside the town I could easily walk to Arbor Lane."

Ten minutes later the driver said over his shoulder: "Next stop for you, Miss," and by the time Lawrence got his bag and helped Katherine down where the bus had stopped at the corner of a dirt lane, the short, dark man was gone. "Straight up and the second right is Arbor Lane." The door swung closed and they were alone together with the dying day.

Lawrence began to feel a growing excitement as they walked up the road

over which tree branches met and spread a canopy like a cathedral nave. He could not explain it to himself, that tightness of the throat, and an unreasoning, unreasonable urge to turn back. Yet so strong was his feeling of apprehension that he was not really shocked when they turned into Arbor Lane and behind a low, boxed hedge he saw the house he had painted six months before.

It stood there in its every detail, revealed in the light of the westering sun. Red brick, with much gingerbread trim, with two turret-like towers at each end, pointed at the top, which he in his painting had made to resemble the ears of a bat. The double-doors were there, too, and obliquely upward on either side the wide windows catching the blood-red light of the sun as its lower arc touched the horizon.

Lawrence said nothing to the girl at that moment when she was reaching for the bell-pull at the side of the door. Not only did he feel that she might doubt his sanity if he tried to explain, but he rather began to doubt it himself. But he looked at the fragile loveliness of her profile in the gathering dusk, and made up his mind that she was not entering that house alone. His resolve was further stiffened when the bell was answered by the short, dark man of the bus, now wearing a houseman's white jacket.

Katherine turned to Lawrence, her lips parted and her eyes full of fear. "I'll go in with you," he said, firmly. The man stepped aside after a moment's hesitation, and they entered the dim hall together. A figure had reached the foot of the stairs and was advancing toward them.

"I am your aunt, Agnes De Salle." It was a woman's voice, but manishly deep. "Samson was on the bus to see that you got here. Your friend may go now that you are safely arrived."

Never in his life had words carried such a travesty of their own meaning to young Lawrence. "Now that you are safely here," she had said. For when she moved into the single light of the hall he saw the woman of those unconscious moments when he stood before the painting after putting on the final touch of the brush.

He had seen her face clearly then, as he saw it now — thin, ageless; it might have indicated thirty years or sixty; bright eyes shining from deep hollows, and a lick of white hair like a plume set in the jet black. She wore something like a kimono, with wide sleeves.

Only half-turning away from Samson, who was still at the open door, Lawrence moved a step to the girl's side.

"We've — Katherine's decided to go on to Winthrop," he said, conscious of the unswerving bright eyes. "She has a reservation at the Inn. Of course, she'll come back to see you tomorrow, but she thought that tonight we would like . . ."

Agnes De Salle looked her utter contempt of him. But behind it, Lawrence believed he saw a madness of purpose and a determination.

"That is as palpable a lie as I have ever heard — made up right where you stand. Who are you?" she demanded, harshly. "Have you some designs upon my niece?"

"Oh, Aunt Agnes! Please!" Katherine put herself partially between them. "Mr. Lawrence — Jonathan is an old friend. He — he — perhaps he will have a cup of tea with us."

It was a fine clutching of straws on the part of both Jonathan and the girl, and when the woman suddenly gave way it was no victory to Lawrence who saw the sardonic raising of one eyebrow.

"Very well. I'm sorry if I've offended your *old* friend. This is the sitting room. If you will be comfortable for a moment . . . You can help me, Samson."

She turned and the man followed. They were instantly swallowed by the gloom of the rear hallway. Lawrence hurried the girl through the doorway which Agnes De Salle had indicated, but he stopped dead on the threshold.

It was *the* room.

"What's wrong?" The girl flinched because his grip brought sudden pain to her arm.

"It's the place, the same place." His excitement seemed to flow through his hand and into her. "Everything is just as it was. The winged sofa! Katherine!"

"Jonathan?"

"You are in danger. Both of us are in danger now. This is an evil house. I've been here before — in some way I can't explain now. That man! He has some terrible power. He looks like a servant, but he's not. They'll be back. Katherine, you must trust me."

She looked into his eyes. He saw there what he had never seen in a woman's eyes before.

"Yes, Jonathan, I trust you."

"Bless you! Don't be frightened. We've got to get out. That woman wants to kill you and he will help. I'll tell you how I know, if we get away."

"If we get away . . ."

She would have fallen but for his strong arm.

"Here! Sit down."

And there she was, swaying back on the 'winged sofa until her head touched the pillow. When the woman came back Lawrence realized Katherine lay just as the girl had lain in that nightmarish picture.

At that point in his testimony, Lawrence stared over the heads of the spectators in the hushed courtroom. It was as if he stood again in those dim,

sinister surroundings. The faces of the jurors were distorted, as though seen through water. Then they cleared and he saw Professor Howland's Vandike and the leathery faces of the farmers and the craftsmen.

"You could almost finish the story yourselves," he said, slowly. "They came into the room — the woman first, the man behind her, an evil controlling spirit. He stood as he did the first time, in the gloom, but I knew him then. She crossed the room, stepping carefully between the tables and the chairs."

The lips of Juror Three moved silently and formed the words — "like a cat."

"She ignored me, just as she ignored me before, and I was held, as I was held before by those invisible bonds which he put about me." Lawrence's face was pale, his hands tight on the rail. "He was a devilish master and she had sold herself to him so that she might achieve what she wanted. I saw her draw the knife from her sleeve."

Lawrence looked at the girl sitting beside Mr. Blundell. Her gaze was fastened on his.

"It was about to happen again," he said, "and I would have to watch while that devil held me with nothing more than a devil's power." Lawrence was testifying now, not to the jury, but to the girl — and in a ringing, dedicated tone.

"I did what I could because at that moment it was given me to do it. The power of evil was smashed because I wanted with all my heart and soul to have it smashed in the interest of all that was good and pure. And when the bond was broken, I did what I had to do."

For a moment his gaze rested on the heavy candelabra which lay on the exhibit table before the clerk.

"That," he said, pointing, "stood on the mantelpiece. I moved to put the woman between me and him in the shadows. As I moved I seized that and threw it in one movement. I am not a weak man and I did not mean that I should throw weakly. It struck her and killed her instantly, I believe. She fell to the floor, dead before she reached it."

He turned to the rows of faces in the jury box.

"And when I looked again," he said, "the man had vanished — because the instrument for evil which he had acquired because of its own murderous desires was dead and no longer of use to him."

The shocked silence of the courtroom lasted for a full minute. Through it, accentuating it, came the breathing of the jurors who were for the most part outdoor men and seemed stifled by the oppression induced by Lawrence's tale.

Then the rest was quickly told. Lawrence's voice was calm and normal as

he told how he got the girl away and back to Amesbury. They drank coffee in an all-night restaurant and walked in the dark streets.

"With daylight, we decided we had to go to the police." Lawrence again looked at the girl. "For we knew by then that we could never go through the rest of our lives — no matter how short our lives may be — with that standing between us."

Mr. Blundell knew that Lawrence was finished. He heaved his bulk out of the chair and fumbled with the string around flat packages on the table.

"I would ask," he said, "that counsel for the State stipulate that this is a fair and faithful photographic enlargement of the house of Agnes De Salle, the deceased in this transaction, in Arbor Lane."

Mr. Grimes put on his spectacles, gave the picture careful study, and said he would agree that that was so.

"And I now offer in addition as defense exhibit this original painting of the De Salle house which the defendant Lawrence has testified to creating. With them I offer documentary statement and depositions, taken at a time when the State had the privilege of cross-examination, supporting the defendant Lawrence's testimony on the delivery of the painting and the fact that he has neither seen nor touched it since it first left his hands. Lastly, I offer a copy of the magazine in which the painting appeared."

Judge Tiplady directed the acceptance of the exhibits and said they might be marked. Then they passed from hand to hand among the jury.

"As I said earlier," Mr. Blundell remarked, "the witness is yours, Mr. District Attorney."

Mr. Grimes had been quite angry with himself for some little time. Despite all he could do, the back of his neck had crawled during the recital of Lawrence's tale, as though a spring insect had lighted there and was creeping through his short hairs. Therefore, in a manner of speaking, he over-donned the robe and mien of State's prosecutor when he got up to begin cross-examination. He was clearly a man who would stand no nonsense.

"Did you tell that story with any expectation of being believed?" he asked. It was a highly improper question, because a defendant on the witness stand is just as much under oath to tell the truth as any other witness, even in a capital trial. Yet, Mr. Blundell made no objection. He knew his client and knew when to let him alone.

"Yes, of course," Lawrence said. "Although I must say now that whether it is believed doesn't seem terribly important from one point of view."

"Oh," said Mr. Grimes. "And just what do you mean by that?"

"I mean," said Lawrence, "that Miss Gray and I have had two months now in which to realize what this means to us. We have seen much of each



other at conferences with Mr. Blundell, even though we are held in prison, and . . ."

Mr. Grimes thought he scented danger. He waved an impatient hand. "We don't want to hear about you and Miss Gray. Whatever she has to say, she can say . . ."

But Mr. Blundell's massive bulk came out of his chair, and he snarled like a disturbed animal.

"Just a minute! The District Attorney invited that response by his line of inquiry. He asked an improper question and there was no objection by me. Let him take the consequences of opening the door. I ask the court to direct the witness to complete his answer."

"The witness may proceed."

"I wanted to say," said Lawrence, and again he was speaking to the girl at the counsel table, "that I never was in love before, but I am now, with all my being. But it is different, much different, than I thought it would be. What I have seen and experienced has made my physical self vastly less important than it once seemed. I believe that is true of both of us — in our separate lives that are no longer separate." He turned to the jury. "It does not seem important to be believed for the mere sake of acquittal — or even for the sake of escaping a sentence of death. It is only important because of what we two once accepted on faith, but which we now *know*. I'm afraid I can put it no better than that."

Then he turned back to the girl, and they exchanged those vows across a distance that seemed bridged by a light no less visible than the ray of sunshine to which he lately had pointed.

Mr. Grimes's cross-examination thereafter was brief because it was fruitless; there was nothing to be gained from a defendant who admitted the act and seemed firm in his knowledge of why and how he came to commit it.

When Katherine Gray went to the stand, called by the same ritual as that used to call Lawrence, she moved with such a proud carriage as to tell the court and the world that she was proud to be there, under the same dread cloud of murder that he was. She was not a tall girl, but her erectness gave an impression of height; and sunlight must have become entangled in her hair because it moved with her when she walked.

Her testimony substantiated that of Lawrence, insofar as it could, and was crystal clear, and delivered in a low, clear voice that never wavered. Something had given to a girl of delicate form and fragile features the quality of steel sheathed in velvet. Perhaps it was that quality which warned Mr. Grimes, awaiting his turn like the lesser animals which await the pleasure of the lion feasting on a stricken doe, that he had better not make too brutal an assault upon her citadel.

When Mr. Blundell stepped close to the witness chair and asked gently whether she did not know of any reason why her aunt should hold such hatred as to desire to kill her, Katherine bowed her head for a moment. When she looked up her eyes were filled with tears.

"Once, perhaps, I might not have thought of such a thing. But she must have been a lonely, bitter woman. Her face — on that day — seemed to indicate it. I was the only child of my father, the man she once thought was going to marry her, and of her sister." The tears began to spill down her cheeks. "Perhaps I was a living symbol of all that she'd never had. Because she hated me. I saw that."

In her excitement she rose from the chair, and her eyes were wide.

"She would have killed me if Jonathan hadn't been there. And now, if you kill him, I shall die, too."

Mr. Blundell turned and walked back to his seat.

"I have nothing further," he said.

There was only one other piece of evidence. Mr. Blundell established, through the three nearest neighbors of the De Salle house, that there actually had existed a short, dark man, who now seemed to have vanished into nothingness. All testified they had seen such a man enter and leave; two of them had been close enough to observe that he did not ring the bell but entered with a key of his own. It was shadowy testimony, and after it was heard the short, dark man disappeared again as behind an impenetrable veil.

Thereafter, Mr. Blundell summed up, Mr. Grimes summed up, and Judge Tiplady charged the jury simply on the law and its particular duty to weigh the credibility of witnesses.

The speech for the defense by Mr. Blundell was one of the shortest on record in that or any other court.

"There's very little I can say that would clarify your understanding of this matter." Mr. Blundell stood with his hands in his pockets, and he appeared to think out each word carefully. "You heard all that I heard, so I'd rather leave it to your minds working in concert when you go to the jury room. It is the Court's job to tell you about the law and the verdicts you could bring in, and the Court will do it.

"I would merely remind you that the State presented no motive as to why this man should kill Agnes De Salle and why this girl should stand by, watch her aunt murdered in cold blood, and then come here to support Lawrence's version of the transaction.

"These two people submitted themselves to your judgment. You saw and heard them. I feel altogether too inadequate to supplement their appearance.

"So I'm just going to paraphrase some words which come down to us from a hill in Jerusalem which is called Golgotha, the place of skulls. Of Jonathan Lawrence and Katherine Gray I say:— into your hands I commend their spirits.

"Thank you for your patience and your attention."

Two deputy sheriffs carried the three-branched candelabrum and the canvas and cardboard exhibits of the defense into the jury room. Professor Howland and his colleagues followed. The good men and true prepared to stand fast together.

"Got all you want?" one of the sheriffs said.

"Perhaps we'd better have a pitcher of water and some glasses." The Professor saw that the room had a naked quality, stripped of all non-essentials, which he thought was proper. The sheriff returning with the pitcher heard what were the opening deliberations of the jury.

"That," said the town hardware dealer, "is the gol-durndest cock-and-bull story that was ever told. An' if anybody thinks I'm going to swallow it, they've . . ."

"Now, Jed! Wait till we've settled down to it."

The sheriff looked wistful, as though he'd like to stay, but under Professor Howland's eye he shut the door behind him. But the Professor couldn't still the talk.

"There's one thing," said the forty-acre farmer, "he don't look like a feller that goes around doing killin's."

"Poppycock!" said the butcher. "If murderers looked like murderers, we could put 'em all away in advance, and there'd be no murders."

"Truest thing you ever said, Hugo." The hardware man emphasized his approval with firm nods.

"Hadn't we better get organized?" Professor Howland took a seat at the head of the table. "I believe it's usual to take a ballot to see what kind of a split we've got, if any. But it is up to you, gentlemen."

Standing by the window, Cy Mathewson, who ran a hay and grain business, wrinkled his forehead and said to no one in particular:

"I don't hold with scoffin' at things we ain't sure of. You take George Hull's wife after their boy was killed out on one o' them Pacific islands. George tells me she's seen him as plain . . ."

"Hallucinations, Cy, hallucinations. Women like that can see anything they've a mind to."

"Gentlemen!"

"Okay, Professor, okay. Guess we'd better take it a bit at a time."

"Naturally. Take it easy, Jed. We're all agreed there's been a killin', and

by God if we find it's a wilful killin', this is just the town to fix his wagon for him."

They began to find seats, shifting about as if uncertain whether there ought to be some sort of precedence in the way they sat. Stern men though they were and determined upon exact justice, they were embarrassed because they were unused to sitting in judgment, especially when it meant that a man's life would have to be forfeited.

"Professor!" The hay and grain man looked at Howland as though there must be wisdom in one so learned. "Do you think this whole business is just impossible?"

"Mr. Mathewson, I stopped defining the impossible many years ago." He looked down the table to where Jurymen Number Eight was standing gazing down at the defense's two exhibits. "And when the physicists took over from God, split the atom and made new elements starting from where Nature left off, I stopped defining the possible.

"In this case, I think we have to look seriously into the matter of motive. You recall Judge Tiplady put quite some emphasis on that. Neither one of these people claims to be insane, so we can rule that out." He paused. "Now, don't you think we ought to take a ballot to show us what arguments we'll have to face — if there's reason for argument?"

"There's reason as far as I'm concerned." The hardware man fished out his pipe and pouch. "A woman's had her head bashed in an' . . ."

"Very well. We'll take a voice poll, starting on my right."

"I'm for guilty." The forty-acre farmer in the first seat spoke slowly, almost reluctantly, but with conviction.

"That's one. Mr. . . ."

"Just a minute, Professor."

"Now, what?"

The man who still examined the picture exhibits was the town's contract carpenter, Tom Sloane. His face was weather-worn to the color of the woods he worked with, and he stared down at the table, now, as though a familiar thing would help him with unaccustomed words.

"If you'll just give me a minute because . . . because, well, I don't know. But wasn't it last November when that feller painted this picture?"

"That's correct, Mr. Sloane. He finished it November 12."

Sloane looked uneasily at the rest. He shifted his feet, chewed his lip.

"Well, there's something mighty queer. Mind you, maybe it ain't evidence, because I'm no witness in the case. But the house didn't look like that six months ago."

All heads swung around to look at Sloane.

"You'd better explain that, Mr. Sloane."

"I intend to. The house didn't look like this painting. Now, look, Professor. What're the rules here? I ain't a witness, like I said."

"Speak up. We've got a man's life in our hands. If you've anything to offer that will throw light on the matter, we're justified in hearing it. I trust that is agreeable to all."

"Right!" Sloane squared his shoulders. "Never was much for legal fol-de-rol myself. Here's the facts. There was a big blow last September, as you'll all recollect. The agent for the De Salle place called me just after Christmas. I mind it well because I'm always slack then and my bills'll show it anyway. There was a skylight blown in and some copper flashing lifted up, tearing out the shingles. And one of them turrets was damaged at the top."

"All right, Tom. Get on with it!"

"Don't rush me, Jed. This ain't easy for me, and it ain't going to be for you, neither, I'm thinkin'. It was all fancy gingerbread at the top of that turret, old-fashioned stuff that I couldn't match up at all. But it was way up, and the agent said nobody'd notice it. So I used some plainer stuff — just pine with regular molding. Now this photograph shows it up plain. You can see this part here doesn't match up with the turret on the other side. But the painting . . ."

Only then did Sloane's mind catch up with his words and tell him their stunning implication.

"By God!" he shouted. "That feller painted my plain molding two months before I put it on."

A small cloud slid across the face of the sun and the room darkened. There was a hush that lasted for a full minute. Then Professor Howland dropped words into the pool of silence.

"You are saying, Mr. Sloane, that Lawrence painted a picture of the De Salle house, not as it looked when he did his painting without even seeing the house, but as it was going to look on the day he entered it — five months later?"

Juror Sloane looked down at his weather-beaten hands and studied them for seconds of silence. Then he looked up and thrust out his jaw.

"That, God help us all, is just what I'm saying, and there ain't no way of disputin' it."

The cloud passed; the sunlight streamed through the windows and the room brightened again. In those brief moments of shadow, the twelve good men and true had been projected from the known and the familiar into the unknown and the unknowable.

Professor Howland was the first to release himself from the bondage that held them.

"Are we now ready for the first ballot?"



FIG. I

Ganymedeus sapiens standardensis

# *Skiametric Morphology and Behaviorism of Ganymedeus Sapiens*

A SUMMARY OF NEOTERIC HYPOTHESES

by KENNETH R. DEARDORF

SUBSEQUENT to the initial intrusion of Ganymedean skiagrams<sup>1</sup> into the scanning specula of early polydimensional exploratory apparatus, a number of theories have been postulated to account for their appearance. These have varied from the original assumption that the profiles were merely aberrations in the crystalline structure of the focussing vector of the apparatus<sup>2</sup> to the extreme sophism that they were revelatory in nature.<sup>3</sup> The equations of Gräf-Hemmler were for a time overlooked.<sup>4</sup>



FIG. II

Ganymedean hurrying



FIG. III

Making sudden stop

There is no longer any divergence from the opinion that the skiagrams are occulted reflections of living organisms. Their incompleteness (they manifest only as mono-line profiles, or cross sections, on the scanning screen — Figure I) is explained by the probability that the conning apparatus as so far developed is able to contact only two of the unknown number of dimensions in which *Ganymedeus* is known to exist. The complete form is a matter for conjecture. In all probability it no more resembles the visible skiagram than the human form resembles a cross section of it obtained, for example, laterally through the thoracic region. Ganymedeian cross sections are, however, much more expressive than cross sections of anthropoid anatomies would be.

It is this expressiveness, with its concomitant implication of sagacity, which has led Bruce<sup>5</sup> to append the designation *sapiens* to the original cognomen *Ganymedeus*, a practice adopted wholeheartedly by subsequent investigators. And it is this same expressiveness which has permitted the amassing of a significant body of knowledge concerning this remarkable species. The skiagrams express not only physical activity (Figures II and III), but abstract personality characteristics as well (Figures IV and V).

Within the profuse polymorphism exhibited, a distinct duality of basic types is distinguishable, apparently analogous to the binate sexuality of the homodimensional primates and other mammals.<sup>6</sup> A typical specimen of the female category is illustrated in Figure VI. Male and female duads occasionally occur, as in Figure VII, which portrays a pair of Ganymedes engaged in what appears to be osculation, intimating that courtship procedures are not dissimilar to those of *Homo sapiens*.

In other ways, the extraordinary parallelism of Ganymedeian life-patterns with those of contemporary *Hominidae* is well documented.

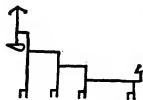


FIG. IV

Conservative type



FIG. V

Ganymedeian villain

Skiagrams are recorded demonstrating a highly developed interest in athletics (Figure VIII). Terpsichorean attitudes also are frequent (Figure IX).

A considerable field for research remains. Additional skiagrams are being recovered, and cataloguing and classifying techniques and categories are still matters of controversy among investigators, awaiting needed clarification and standardization. It is to be hoped that more complete and better collated data will be available in the near future.



FIG VI

Ganymedeus feminis

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<sup>2</sup> *Les conséquences de l'agitation des cristaux porphyrindizines dans l'origine des caractères uniques Ganymèdes*. Jean Chevalier, Rapport présenté au



FIG. VII

Ganymedeans osculating



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<sup>5</sup> *Further Observations Regarding Cultural and Social Aspects of Gany-medeus sapiens*. W. Miller Bruce, *Annals of the Tennyson Science Foundation*, 1948, pp. 142-8.

<sup>6</sup> *Les différences constitutives entre le mâle et la femelle dans les animaux Ganymèdes*. Jean Chevalier, *Bulletin de la Société des Sciences Physiques*, June '49, pp. 547-551.

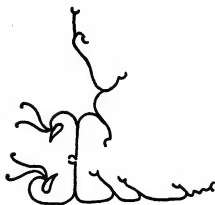


FIG. VIII

Ganymedean acrobats



FIG. IX

Ganymedean performing  
light fantastic

*The mathematical discoveries of Professor Cleanth Penn Ransom, the Sane Scientist, have so far succeeded in putting an end to the career of a promising poet (The Poetry Machine), launching the career of a successful opera singer (The Mathematical Voodoo), and singularly altering the career of an eminent African witch doctor (The Embarrassing Dimension). If they have failed noticeably to affect the course of American mathematics, it is because some imp of the perverse always sees to it that any Ransom discovery involves quite unpredictable complications. We bring you here one of the more complicated of even Ransom's ventures, in which the tubby little mathematician turns himself into a basketball star — and his long-suffering friend Professor MacTate at last steps out of his rôle of ironic observer to enjoy a quiet triumph of his own.*

## *The Hyperspherical Basketball*

by H. NEARING, JR.

"THE way you make a circle," said Professor Cleanth Penn Ransom, of the Mathematics Faculty, "is to hold one terminal point of a line down while you revolve the other. See?"

Professor Archibald MacTate, of Philosophy, smiled with one corner of his mouth. "Fascinating," he said.

"Now you needn't be sarcastic, MacTate." Ransom stuck out his little belly and began to swing in his swivel chair. "This is big."

"Oh." MacTate crushed out his cigarette in the icosahedral ash tray on his colleague's desk, crossed his long legs, and clasped his hands around one knee. He looked up with studied expectancy.

"So that's how you generate two dimensions from one," said Ransom. "Hold one end still and turn the other. Mechanically, you do it with a compass, which is basically the two end points of a line. Now, how do you make a sphere out of a circle?" He touched his thumbs and forefingers together to make a digital circle. "You hold one axis still and revolve the other." He twisted his hands through the air. "It's the principle of the ice-cream dipper. One axis fixed, the other turning. Now." He leaned forward and aimed a forefinger at MacTate. "How do you generate a four-dimensional figure from a sphere?"

"There, Ransom, I'm afraid you have me."

"Look." Ransom put his finger on the desk top and began to trace imaginary drawings on it. "To make a two-dimensional figure, a circle, out of a line, you hold one *point* down and turn the other. To make a three-dimensional figure, a sphere, out of a circle, you hold one *line* down and turn the other. So to make a four-dimensional figure, or hypersphere, out of a sphere, you would have to hold one *plane* — represented by a great circle, or equator — down and turn the other. Right?"

"I suppose so." MacTate looked with quizzical intentness at the imaginary drawings on the desk top. "How would you go about doing that?"

The phone rang. Ransom made a wry face, as if he knew who was calling, and picked it up.

"Hello. . . . Yes, Gladmore. . . . Yes, we'll be ready Wednesday. With my ball, don't forget. . . . Right. . . . Yes, I've got just the man." Ransom eyed MacTate furtively. "MacTate, in Philosophy. You know. . . . What?" Ransom glowered. "What do you mean? Of course he's honest. I — . . . What? . . . Now get this, Gladmore. I always pick them. Honest men. Just because — . . . *What?* Why, you — " There was a loud click in the receiver. Ransom snarled at the phone and banged it down on the cradle.

"Ransom." MacTate looked at his colleague with an expression of cosmic pessimism. "What have you got me into this time?"

Ransom's scowl disappeared. He looked up and smiled fatuously. "Oh, yes, MacTate. I was just going to tell you when he called. Gladmore, I mean. The basketball coach. You know. We need you to help us on a sort of — project."

MacTate looked at him.

"Now, don't look that way, MacTate. It's nothing at all, really. We just want you to referee the — We just want you to be a referee. As I was telling Gladmore just now — "

"Ransom."

"All right, MacTate. My God, there's nothing criminal about it. Gladmore has challenged the committee to a basketball game."

MacTate shut his eyes.

"MacTate. Will you stop acting as if I had assaulted your grandmother? You won't have to do anything at all, actually. Hardly anything, anyway."

MacTate opened his eyes. "Old man," he said. "Since I'm being personally involved in this — project, I trust you won't object to my asking a few seemingly impertinent questions. First, *what* committee?"

"The Faculty Committee for Investigating the Improvement of Athletic Purity. You remember, MacTate. I'm chairman."

"But there aren't any ringers on the team this year, are there? Why should Gladmore —?"

"That's just the point." Ransom lifted a finger demonstratively. "The alumni are worried about their taxes this year, so we don't have any ringers. But do you see what that means?" He raised his eyebrows. "If the committee stuck to its assignment, it would have nothing to do. Well, we all agreed that we couldn't just sit there doing nothing, so we prepared a report protesting against the time that basketball practice takes from the players' studies."

"Ransom."

"Don't reproach me. I'm only the chairman. But Gladmore's got it into his head that I was the prime mover — not that he has a noble passion for any of us — and he said we ought to see what it feels like to play a game of basketball without spending enough time training for it. So —"

"But, Ransom, you've never spent *any* time training."

"That's what he said. He said that if you add up the ages of the committee, we've been out of training about two and a half centuries, so it wouldn't be fair to challenge us to a whole game. But he bet us a stiffer eligibility rule against suppression of the report that we couldn't last half a game against him and the coaching and training staff."

"I'll bet you can't, too."

"Well, don't give any odds." Ransom smiled as if he were digesting a canary.

"Ransom, what are you up to? You can't possibly —"

"All right. You'll see." Ransom nodded his head with Olympian assurance. "He was in such a black rage, I couldn't help taking advantage of it."

"Who was?"

"Gladmore. Who else?"

"I don't —"

"Look, MacTate. We prepared this report, see? And Gladmore got mad about it. You got that now? He was so mad that I decided to spring it on him while he couldn't think straight. And he —"

"Spring *what* on him?"

"My four-dimensional basketball. You know. If you want to make a circle —"

"Ransom. Let's recapitulate a bit. You told Gladmore you would accept his challenge if he let you use a four-dimensional basketball? And he agreed? Just like that?"

"Sure. He was so mad that he said, and I quote, that he didn't give a darn what ball we used as long as he could get us out on a court." Ransom's eyes

twinkled reminiscently. "Of course I didn't tell him it was a four-dimensional basketball. I just said could we use my own ball if it was regulation size. And then he said that."

"And I suppose you have a ball of this description."

"Of course. That's what I was telling you about." Ransom looked down at the imaginary drawings on the desk top. "You hold one great circle of a sphere in place while you rotate the one at right angles to it, and you get a hypersphere. Tricky thing. We'll drive them crazy with it." He reached into his bottom desk drawer and groped around in it. "Look." He took out a spherical object the size of a tennis ball and bounced it on the desk. As it struck the desk, it expanded to the size of a basketball. As it rose into the air, it shrank to the size of a volley ball. After passing through similar transformations for several bounces, it wobbled around on the desk, assuming various sizes from ping-pong to soccer ball, and at last came to rest looking like an ordinary basketball except that it had no leather rind, being made of rubber painted brown.

MacTate looked at the thing incredulously. "How on earth do you make it do that?"

"Fourth dimension." Ransom beamed at the ball. "I guess it's easiest to explain by analogy. Look." He took a sheet of paper and drew a circle on it. "Here's a two-dimensional universe. This sheet of paper. With a two-dimensional" — he pointed to the circle — "basketball in it. Now, suppose you're an inhabitant of this universe and want to turn the circle into a sphere. How would you do it?"

"I give up. How?"

Ransom sketched in a skeleton figure beside the circle. "If you weren't two-dimensional, you could cover the circle with bubble gum and blow against it. That would have the same effect as holding one axis still and revolving the other. But since you can only go up and down and back and forth" — he waved his pencil in the relevant directions — "you can't get outside of the inside of the circle to blow. Right?" He looked up and wagged the pencil at MacTate. "But —" He drew two little parallel lines across the circumference of the circle. "Suppose you were to pump everything out of this circle. What would happen? You don't need a perfect vacuum, even if you could make one. What would happen if you just lowered the molecular pressure in the circle? What always happens sooner or later in low-pressure areas of the air, for instance? That's right." Ransom waved his hand toward the circle. "You get a wind."

MacTate leaned forward and pointed to the circle. "And then if you suddenly squirted bubble gum into the circle, across the path of the wind — I see."

"Only I squirted a quick-hardening synthetic rubber into a hollow sphere to make this thing." Ransom put his hand on the hypersphere, which shrank to the size of a polo ball.

"And the reason it gets bigger and smaller —"

"Is the same reason this circle would get bigger and smaller, if it were the section of a sphere wobbling back and forth across a two-dimensional universe."

"But, Ransom, what would keep the sphere from rolling out of the two-dimensional universe altogether?" MacTate eyed the hypersphere dubiously.

"Well —" Ransom scratched his head. "That's against the rules, I guess. You see, the molecules that constitute the cross-wind don't belong to the same universe as the enveloping rubber. You get some of them inside the ball to create the expansion pressure, but until you squirt rubber across their path they go right on through your universe. Now the rubber itself" — he cupped his hands — "is still part of the original universe, only twisted out of its normal continuity. See? So it can seem to shrink and shrink, down to a point even. Space is probably elastic enough for that. But it won't leave its universe for good." He looked at the hypersphere. "I don't think it will." He frowned. "MacTate, how could it? That would leave a hole in the universe. You could drop right out —"

"Yes." MacTate looked thoughtful.

"Well, we're not going to play hard enough to bust the universe." Ransom laughed. "The beautiful part of it is that it can never get any *bigger* than a basketball. Any more than the sphere" — he pointed to the sheet of paper — "can get bigger than its equator. So my agreement with Gladmore was perfectly legal. This ball is regulation size." He put his finger on the hypersphere and pushed it down to the size of a golf ball. "There's just one thing that worries me, MacTate."

"How to get rid of it?"

Ransom looked up. "What?"

MacTate gestured at the hypersphere. "Might be rather dangerous to have around for long, don't you think? Since you're not absolutely certain of its affinity for this universe —"

"Oh, no." Ransom laughed. "We can lay it in a cornerstone somewhere, if it comes to that. No, I was thinking about the game. What if the ball goes through both baskets at once? Who scores? Now, you're referee, and if that happens —"

"Just a moment, Ransom." MacTate pointed to the sheet of paper. "How can it go through both baskets at once?"

Ransom picked up the paper and rolled it into a cylinder. "You know

what Einstein says about space. Curved. In a two-dimensional universe, it's like this cylinder. Only you don't know it, because you have no sense of the dimension it's curving through. Now." He drew the cross section of a basket at either end of the sheet of paper and bent it in the middle. "If space can be curved, it should also be capable of rippling, shouldn't it? Suppose you got a ripple like this right at the basketball court. What would happen?" He squeezed the two ends of the paper together so that one of the basket cross sections was superposed on the other. "A sphere dropping into this two-dimensional universe could go through both baskets at once."

"But in that case, why wouldn't you see the ball in two parts of the court all the time?" MacTate pointed at the paper.

Ransom jerked his head impatiently. "Because it's a *ripple*, MacTate. Ripples don't stand still. They — ripple. See?" He waved the paper in the air.

"Very well." MacTate tapped the desk top with his finger. "When your ripple's gone away, why doesn't the sphere tear a hole in one wing of the basketball court?"

Ransom stared at him for a moment, then laughed blandly. "Take it easy, MacTate. You've been reading too many science fiction stories. Hell bent on destroying the universe, aren't you? Look." He pressed the ends of the paper together again. "While the sphere intersects two wings of the two-dimensional universe, it acts as a sort of cementing continuum. Holds the ripple in place for the time being. Maybe the wings might spread far enough for one section of the sphere, or even both sections, to become a point, but it's still there holding on. Now eventually the tension of space, as it tries to spring out of the ripple, will pull the sphere back here" — he pointed to the center of curvature in the sheet of paper — "or some player will pass the ball back. Same thing. So the two sections of the sphere finally become identical, and your universe is intact." He smoothed out the paper. "I tell you we're not going to play hard enough to damage space, MacTate, so stop worrying about it. You just worry about how to score a double basket."

"Well now, there, you see, Ransom." MacTate waved a deprecatory hand. "How can I possibly referee the game if things like that are going to happen? I would have enough difficulty refereeing an ordinary game —"

"Now wait a minute, MacTate." Ransom spoke in soothing tones. "You've seen enough games to go through the motions. Besides, you're the only referee we can get that I would trust. Just call the shots as you see them. That's all. And if you have any trouble ask me."

On the night of the game, the tiers of benches surrounding the basketball court in the University gym were largely vacant. The spectators, clustered

on the right at midcourt, consisted of coaches' wives, members of the basketball squad and their girl friends, a few sympathetic faculty members, and a lunatic fringe of students that considered it a novelty to see the faculty make fools of themselves. Here and there, in odd parts of the stands, were antisocial individuals who had nowhere else to go. MacTate sat at the timekeeper's desk with the ancient janitor who was to keep track of the ten-minute halves. He could feel no epic expectancy in the air.

The coach and his cohorts, clad in the maroon-and-lavender of the team, suddenly bounced out to the court and began to drop basketballs through the hoop with contemptuous ease. They were greeted by applause from their wives, whistles and cheers from the squad, and a few catcalls from enthusiastic non-partisans.

From the corner of his eye MacTate caught a movement at the other end of the court. The stands hummed with ill-suppressed laughter, followed by a scattering of polite applause and a few good-natured boos. Shuddering slightly, MacTate looked down at the new arrivals. From the reaction of the stands he expected to see the Spirit of Seventy-Six plus two. He was unprepared for what he did see.

They seemed strangely naked in white gym suits, and the physiognomies that struck terror in the hearts of graduate students and lent Magian awfulness to the faculty senate looked a little ridiculous over sagging bellies and knock-knees. Two or three of them were poised in attitudes of apprehension, like withered nymphs about to take flight from satyrs; but Ransom, who held the hyperspherical ball balanced carefully on one hand, beckoned them sternly into a huddle.

Coach Gladmore whistled at Ransom, waved, and trotted over to the timekeeper's desk. He was a lithe, raw-boned man with a crew haircut and an air of clean-living youth that was spoiled, slightly, by the crow's-feet about his eyes and the incipient jowls about his chin.

"What do you say, MacTate? You're MacTate, aren't you? Let's get started."

Ransom minced up to the desk, his eyes fixed on the hypersphere balanced on his hand.

"Well, Ransom," said Gladmore. "Ready to make a little history tonight?" He clapped Ransom savagely on the shoulder. The ball on Ransom's hand wobbled violently and shrank to the size of a large cantaloupe.

Gladmore looked at the thing suspiciously. "Say —" The hypersphere shrank to the size of an orange. "Look here, Ransom." Gladmore frowned. "What are you trying to pull? What's that thing you —?"

"Now listen, Gladmore." Ransom steadied the ball, which resumed its basketball size, and jabbed a finger at the coach. "You said we could use



my ball. Regulation size, see?" He held up the hypersphere, which vibrated slightly like a soap bubble. "And that's what we're going to use. Don't think you can back out —"

"Back out!" Gladmore's face turned red. "By Godfrey, we'll show you. Cheat all you want to, you — you — slacker. We'll play you with a medicine ball, by Godfrey. Just get out on this court. Just —" He went mute with rage and shook a finger violently in the direction of center court.

"Bully for you." Ransom scowled at him, turned coldly and went back to his teammates.

Gladmore smacked his palm with his fist, seethed out a venomous "By Godfrey," and leaped to center court, whistling shrilly to his men. They bounced to their positions and crouched in menacing anticipation. MacTate went out to the center circle.

Ransom's boys scampered somewhat creakily to their places. Ransom himself faced Gladmore — or rather the number on Gladmore's chest — in the center circle and handed the hypersphere to MacTate.

MacTate looked down at Ransom, up at Gladmore, and around at the other members of the faculty team. "Ransom, don't you think —?"

"Never mind, MacTate. Start the game."

MacTate shrugged, blew his whistle, and threw the hypersphere into the air. It shrank somewhat on its way up, but Gladmore tapped it squarely into the hands of a maroon-and-lavender guard, cut around Ransom, received the pass almost over his shoulder, and tossed the ball, the size of a shotput, into the basket with one hand.

There were cheers and applause from the stands. Ransom called for time out.

When his team emerged from the huddle, he threw the ball into play, from behind the basket, into the hairy arms of Professor Bleedwell, of Zoology, who dribbled it courageously to midcourt and waited for Ransom to join him. Bleedwell tossed the hypersphere to his colleague, and the two came together, turning their backs to their opponents. As the maroon-and-lavender darted out to instigate activity, Ransom straightened up, called, "Wait for the signal," and skipped sideways down the court. While Gladmore's minions were harrying Bleedwell, Ransom stepped beneath the enemy basket. Opening his fist, he rolled the hypersphere up to circus-balloon size and threw it at the hoop. He missed.

MacTate blew his whistle. "Walking with the ball."

"MacTate!"

"Sorry, old man. You told him I was honest." His eyes twinkled. "Reputation, you know."

"But how do you know he didn't pass it to me? As a point in space?"

"Try explaining that to Gladmore," said MacTate. "Anyway, your hand." He pointed. "You kept it closed all the way down. Couldn't possibly have caught it."

Ransom muttered something ending in "friends" and rejoined his team. The maroon-and-lavender brought the ball down the floor with a series of semi-acrobatics while their opponents watched helplessly. Gladmore took a pass almost under Ransom's nose and flipped the hypersphere through the hoop again. As the stands broke into laughter, Ransom called for another time-out.

When they came out of the huddle this time, Ransom and Professor Chadwick, of Sinology, worked the ball casually to midcourt while Bleedwell scampered unobtrusively to a far corner of enemy territory. When he got there, he turned around and flapped his hairy arms. Chadwick, who had once pitched a no-hit game for a boys' club in Tokyo, squeezed the hypersphere to the size of a baseball and threw him a somewhat erratic but surprisingly fast curve. During his youth in Chicago, Bleedwell had frequently sneaked off from his studies to witness the legerdemain of Messrs. Tinker, Evers, and Chance. He scooped in the pitch like a major leaguer, wheeled, and lobbed the ball neatly through the basket. The stands uttered something that sounded like a gasp.

Ransom called for a third time-out. After conferring with his team, he puffed over to MacTate, wiping his face with a towel. He was drenched with perspiration and smelt like a senescent bear.

"My God, MacTate. How much longer to the end of the period?"

MacTate looked at the timekeeper's stopwatch. "Five or six minutes. Don't tell me you're tired after all these time-outs."

Ransom groaned. "We're at the awkward age for athletics. Too old not to mind it and too young to be prostrated." He looked at MacTate reproachfully. "Anyway, we don't just rest during those time-outs. We burn up mental energy." He could not help grinning with pride. "How you like our baseball team?"

MacTate nodded. "Versatile game."

Ransom grinned again. "You haven't seen anything. *My* long suit was marbles. Won a prize once. Wait till you see." He threw down the towel and went back to his team.

The maroon-and-lavender swept down the floor again, but seemed in no hurry to reach the basket, concentrating rather on wearing out their opponents with the virtuosity of their tactics. They bounced the ball closer and closer to the shaking knees of the faculty team. Finally Gladmore aimed a pass straight at Ransom's little protruding belly. Ransom lost his breath and balance together as the ball caromed from his abdomen into

the hands of a grinning maroon-and-lavender forward. When he had recovered his breath and scrambled to his feet, Ransom headed for Gladmore, who was once more in possession of the ball. There was a melee which MacTate was unable to follow, and then Gladmore let forth a roar, elbowed Ransom violently with his free arm, and began to hop up and down on one foot.

MacTate blew his whistle. "Free throw for Ransom."

The maroon-and-lavender turned to him with expressions of belligerent outrage.

"What are you talking about?" roared Gladmore. "Didn't you see him stamp on me with both feet? I knew you were crooked. I —"

"My dear fellow," said MacTate. "I'm not sure I shouldn't have called it foul when you threw the ball at his stomach. The game is proceeding unethically."

Gladmore looked at the ball in his hand. "You've noticed that, have you?" He glared at MacTate, threw the ball down in disgust, and trotted back to his own basket. When the teams had lined up, Ransom stepped to the foul line and squeezed the hypersphere down to marble size. He squinted carefully at the hoop. Swinging his arm, he shot the ball into the air with his thumb and forefinger. It struck the edge of the basket, bounced up, and fell through.

Ransom looked around at his teammates with an eager smile. "What's that? Three to four?"

"Heads up, chaps," said Chadwick. The maroon-and-lavender had put the ball into play and were starting down the floor. Ransom groaned wearily as he turned to head off Gladmore, who had the ball. Gladmore slipped around him contemptuously and spun the ball toward a teammate farther up the floor.

At the top of its arc, the spinning hypersphere vanished into the air. Gladmore stared open-mouthed at the point of its disappearance. Suddenly Ransom grunted. Gladmore turned around to see the ball clasped to the stomach of his astonished arch foe. "Now look here, Ransom —"

Ransom eyed him warily and dribbled the ball out to midcourt. "Listen," he whispered hoarsely to his colleagues, "let's stall till we can catch our breath."

They began to take turns bouncing the hypersphere in little circles around the center of the court. Whenever Gladmore's cohorts threatened them, they would squeeze the hypersphere down to handball size and toss it back and forth like a beanbag. They were still doing it when the buzzer sounded to end the first period.

When he heard the buzzer, Ransom flopped supine on the floor, squeezed

the ball in one hand, and folded his arms around his head. His oldest colleague hurried off to the locker room. The others staggered to the side lines, where they sat down and began to rub their legs. There was a scattering of boos from the stands.

Gladmore and his men looked at MacTate accusingly.

"What's this?" said Gladmore. "Another time-out?"

Ransom unfolded his arms and sat up. "What are you talking about, Gladmore? That was the buzzer for the half, wasn't it?"

"The *half*? What's the matter with you, Ransom? You know darned well we're playing two *quarters*."

"All right. That's just the point. If we're playing half a game, then the half comes between the two quarters. The half time, I mean. It's arithmetic, Gladmore. You ever study that?"

"Now look here, Ransom." Gladmore was turning red. "You brought in a crooked ball. I didn't say anything. You tried to break my foot. I didn't say anything. You froze the ball instead of playing like a man. I still didn't say anything. But this, by Godfrey" — he smacked his palm with his fist — "this is *too much*."

"A little less swearing, Gladmore," said Ransom, eyeing him disdainfully.

"You, MacTate." Gladmore turned and held out his hands in appeal. "Was it your understanding they could rest between quarters?"

MacTate pursed his lips. He looked at Ransom. "You know, Ransom, he probably has a point there. If the intention of his wager was to wear you out, that would hardly allow for rest periods, would it?"

"But I am worn out." Ransom looked at MacTate reproachfully.

"Not enough to remember the lesson I'm going to teach you," said Gladmore. "Get on your feet, Ransom. You heard the referee's decision."

"It wasn't a decision," said Ransom. "We're still discussing the point."

"Look. He's been arguing for more than ten seconds, and he's still on this side of the court. Our ball." Gladmore motioned to MacTate. "Let's go."

Ransom's team, reassembled on the side lines, heard Gladmore's remark and ran anxiously out on the court. MacTate shrugged, bent over to take the ball from Ransom's hand, and tossed it to Gladmore. He blew his whistle.

"MacTate." Ransom looked martyred.

"Here comes your man, old boy." MacTate pointed to Gladmore. Ransom struggled to his feet and limped after him. The maroon-and-lavender seemed bent upon punishing the faculty team for its effrontery in scoring only one point less than they had. Their virtuosity with the ball became almost pyrotechnical. Ransom and his men ran until they could run no more, and finally stood exhausted while their opponents wove in and out among them in ballet-like patterns.

At last Gladmore, tiring of the farce, leaped high into the air with his back turned to the basket and spun the ball deftly at the backboard. Everyone saw the hypersphere hit the backboard and heard the thud of its impact. Then it had disappeared. It had not bounced through the hoop.

"Look." MacTate pointed toward the basket at the other end of the court. Both teams craned their necks. The mesh swung violently from side to side, and the hypersphere, at almost full size, dropped from it.

"MacTate." Ransom turned to him with wide-eyed delight. "That's two points for us."

MacTate looked up at the faculty's basket and rubbed his chin. "I don't know, old man. If it went through your basket as a point in space —"

"A point in space isn't a ball. By definition, I mean. A ball has to have a dimensional — Shh." Gladmore was regarding them suspiciously.

Gladmore turned his head and stared at the other basket for a moment, then raced down the floor, followed by his team. The ball was rolling toward him. He picked it up, examined it carefully, and stalked back to MacTate, to whom Ransom was whispering excitedly beyond the end line.

"Now see here —"

"No you don't, Gladmore." Ransom stopped whispering and faced him. "That's perfectly legal. If you throw the ball through your own basket, it's our points."

"Ransom, you are the lowest, crookedest, underhanded, double-dealing —" Gladmore raised the ball over his head and dashed it with all his might on the floor. It bounced up about three feet and disappeared, but Gladmore was too furious to notice.

"Now listen, Gladmore." Ransom jabbed a finger at him. "You don't have to throw a tantrum just because the rule book's against you. If you had any sense of sportsmanship —"

"Sportsmanship!" A vein stood out in Gladmore's forehead. "You have the gall to talk about sportsmanship —" He smacked his palm with his fist. "Come out on this court. Keep your lousy two points. Come out on this —" Gesturing operatically, he stepped back, half turning his body. Suddenly the anger in his face was mitigated by an odd confusion. Ransom gasped. Gladmore's head, arms, and chest were visible, as were his thighs, legs, and feet; but the lower part of his abdomen, trunks and all, had melted into the air. The two halves of him began slowly to double together like a jackknife.

"MacTate. The universe. It's happened." Ransom rushed to Gladmore and seized his legs, while MacTate took his arms. They pulled together with all their might. There was a loud sucking sound, and then Gladmore was free of the dimensional gap and clearly visible all the way down. But his trunks were gone.

The stands began to laugh giddily. Gladmore turned purple.

"Here, men." Ransom beckoned to his team. "Stand around him. You" — he waved at the maroon-and-lavender — "go down and get him another pair of trunks." He glanced toward the point in space where Gladmore's trunks had disappeared. "And get a rope and a piece of canvas. A big one."

Gladmore was too far transported in rage to feel grateful. "By Godfrey, Ransom," he said over and over in hoarse whispers, "you'll pay for this."

His men came back with the new trunks, and he stepped into them behind his screen of faculty.

Ransom took the canvas that the trunk-bearers had brought him and gingerly approached the approximate location of the space bubble. Suddenly there was a sound of suction, and the canvas bulged out in the center, forming a sphere the size of a basketball. The canvas began to slither eerily around the space-bubble into nothingness. Ransom hastened to roll the rest of it around the bubble several times. Then he brought the two ends together and tied them firmly. "Wonder if we can tow it," he said.

MacTate looked at it. "Doubtful," he said. "How could we have got Gladmore out if it were movable?"

"My God, that's right." Ransom tied the other end of the rope tightly to the nearest guard rail and frowned at the floating canvas bubble. "Now what are we going to do with it?"

"Just a moment, Ransom." MacTate pointed to the end line of the court. "It's over here several feet off the playing floor. Why don't you have them build a steel and concrete pillar around it?"

Ransom looked at Gladmore. "You hear that, Gladmore? You'll have to build a pillar around this bundle, to keep from —"

"Hold on, Ransom." MacTate turned to Gladmore. "You really will have to do something about this — bundle, Gladmore. It's a hole into the fourth dimension. Can't have it around for people to go running into."

Gladmore looked at the thing. "Of all the people in the world, wouldn't it take Ransom to do a fool thing like that?" He scowled. "Oh, all right. Tomorrow I'll —"

"Listen, Gladmore," said Ransom. "Use your head. If you let it go till tomorrow, you can't tell what might happen. If you don't —"

"Say." Gladmore looked at Ransom suspiciously. "Why are you so anxious to delay the game? We'll just finish the game before —"

"The game's over. You lost the ball."

"What do you mean the game's over? We have plenty of basketballs."

"Now wait a minute, Gladmore." Ransom jabbed a finger at him. "The agreement was that we would play with my ball, and that's what we're going to do. You get my ball back and we'll play. Otherwise" — he waved

his hand — "the game's over." Suddenly his eyes gleamed. "Look. We won it, too. That new eligibility rule —"

"Won it!" Gladmore's vein began to rise again.

"Sure. Five to four. That last basket —"

"MacTate." Gladmore controlled himself and turned away from Ransom. "I don't have to talk to this — You tell him whether he won the game."

MacTate rubbed his chin. Suddenly he found himself reminiscing. Odd thing to do, considering the circumstances. But he thought back over his years of frustration in the classroom. He thought of the futility of academic education in general, the cribbing, the cutting, the uncomprehending faces. He thought of all the philosophy papers he had ever corrected. Coaches, even the unpleasant ones like Gladmore, were the real teachers. Their boys probably didn't realize that they were unpleasant. They tried their best to learn everything their coaches taught, and from them they learned to be skillful and self-possessed, and to respect something, if only a game, for the rest of their lives.

He looked at Gladmore. "Yes, he did win the game. According to the agreement." Gladmore stared at him. Ransom smiled with evil delight. "But there'll be no new eligibility rule," MacTate added. Ransom's smile disappeared. "The wager, if I remember, was that the faculty would not play two full quarters. And they didn't."

Gladmore held out his hand. "MacTate, I thought you were a faculty member. I apologize." He shook MacTate's hand and looked at the canvas bundle suspended in the air. "I'll put warning signs around that thing and see that the gym's locked up before I leave. Tomorrow I'll get the repair boys in and give you a call so you can supervise the job." He turned his back to Ransom and trotted off the floor, whistling to his men. The stands uttered a chorus of disappointed ah's.

MacTate turned to them and announced, "Game called off by mutual consent of the participants. Faculty leading five to four, but no decision."

Ransom regarded his colleague thoughtfully. "MacTate, you didn't *want* a new eligibility rule, did you?"

MacTate sighed. "I guess not, Ransom. You shouldn't have had a teacher for your referee. Not a philosophy teacher, anyway."

Ransom shook his head sadly. "You know, in Shakespeare, where Caesar says *Et tu Brute?* I didn't think I really understood that line before tonight, but" — he scratched his head — "I don't know. I can't figure you out, MacTate." He tied another knot in the rope around the canvas bundle and grabbed MacTate's arm. "Come down with me while I get dressed, and then we'll go some place for a drink." He puffed out his lips, blew wearily, and then grinned. "It's high time I broke training again."

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